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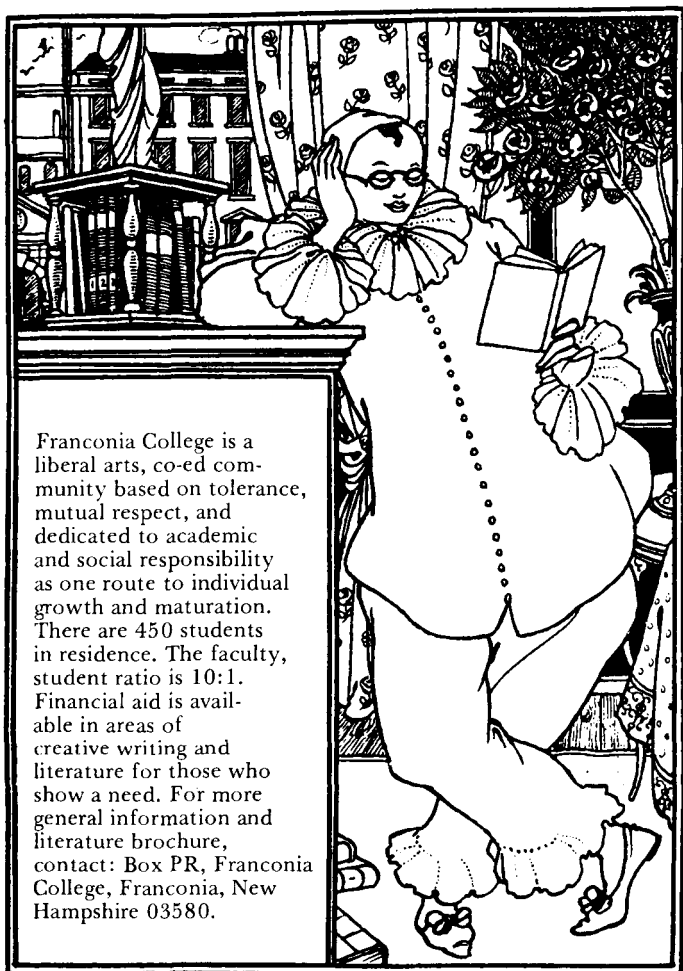
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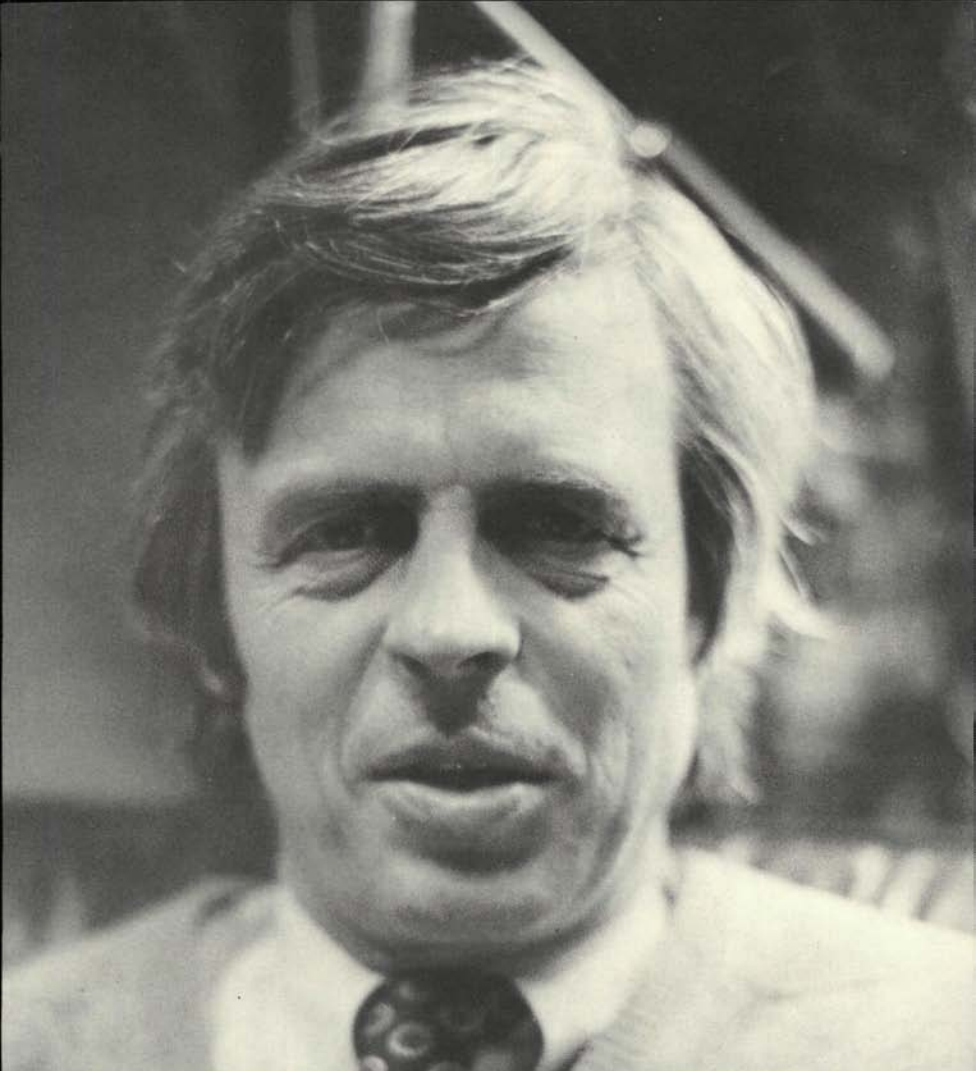
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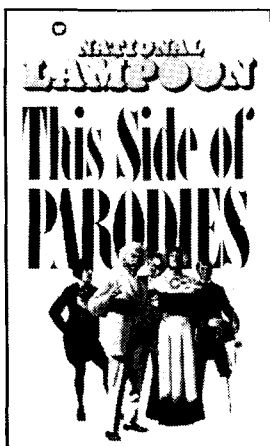
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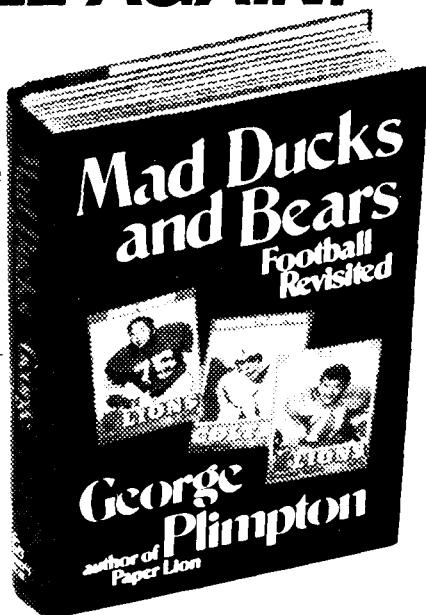
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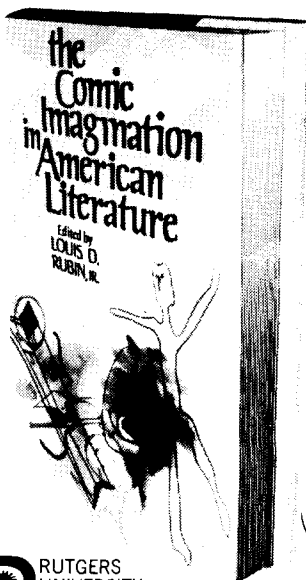
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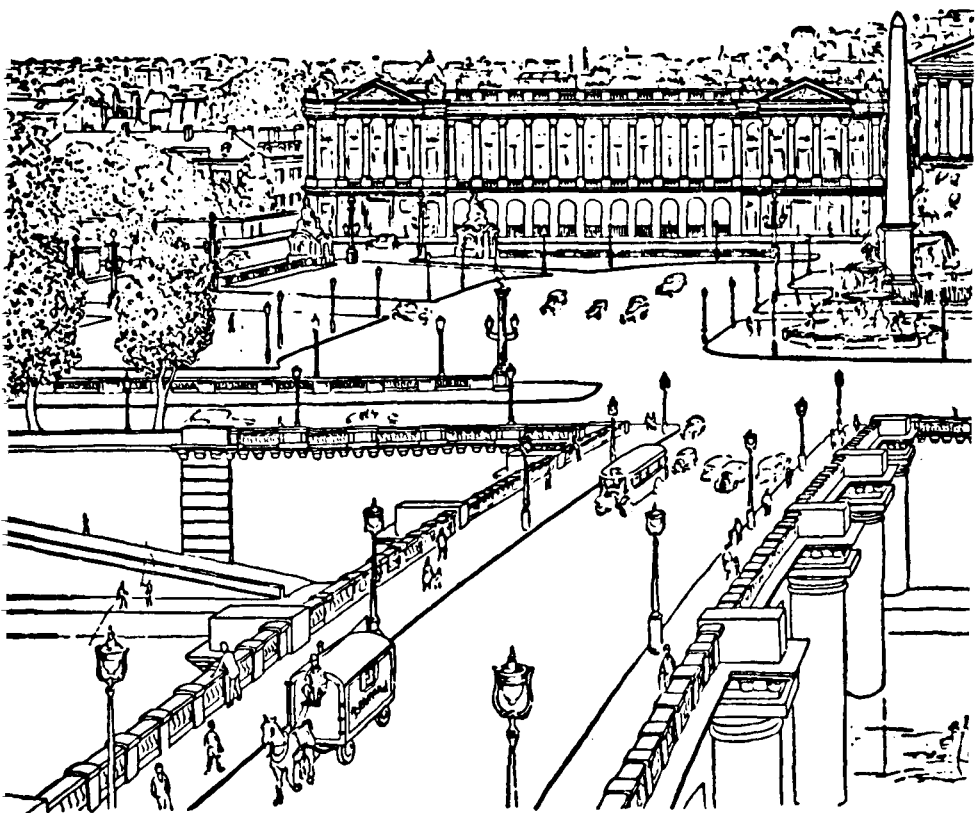
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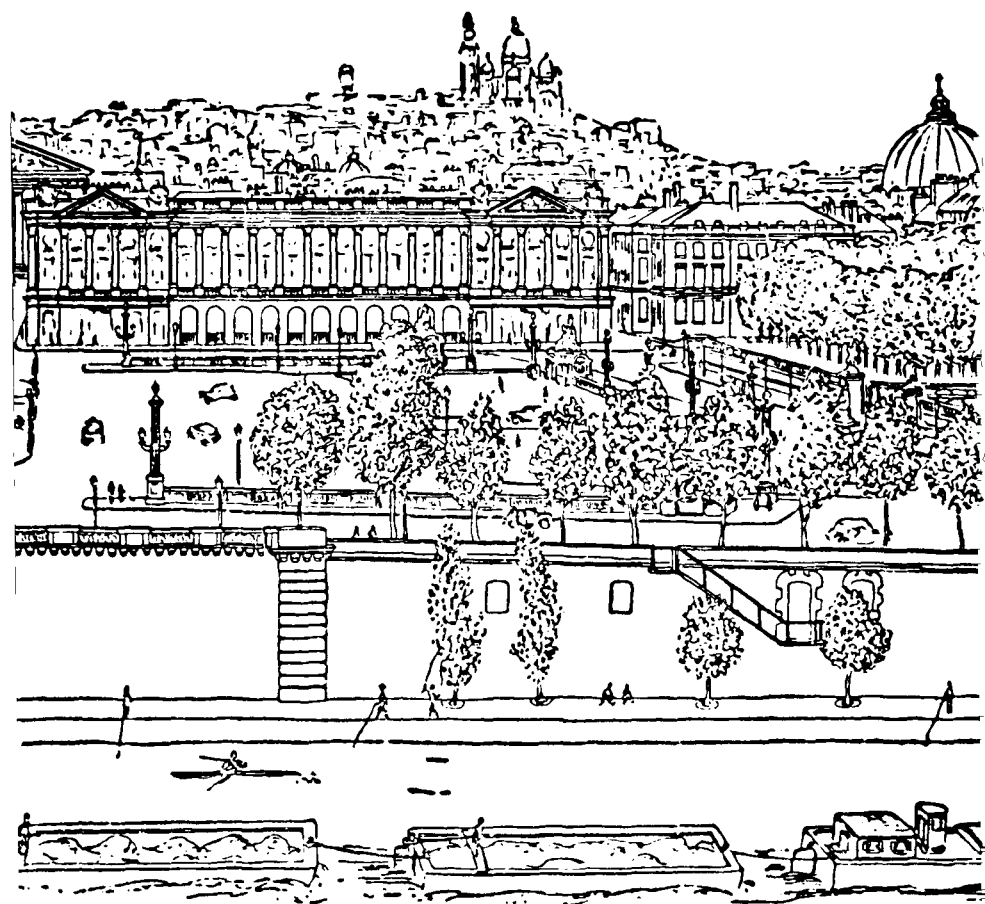
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Notice

This magazine, after a long time abroad, is now publishing out of a small office in New York City. The move has been a difficult one to initiate—since a firm policy of The Paris Review has been to stick to the tradition of an expatriate paper. . . to stay abroad the better to find and publish material largely out of the mainstream of literature, to offer works which in the phrase sanctified by The Little Review, the distinguished expatriate magazine of the '30's, "makes no compromise with public taste." But this attitude, while absolutely appropriate, no longer seems a matter of geographical location. The ease of travel and communication has lessened the need for a magazine serving a "colony" of writers living abroad, and indeed such a colony, while in evidence in the 1950's when The Paris Review began, no longer survives to such a degree. While we have tried to continue publication in Europe, the economic convolutions of the past years have made it increasingly difficult to maintain operations there. Thus, like other artistic organizations which have given up their roots (the Ballet Russe, the Budapest String Quartet, indeed the Lakers now of Los Angeles), we are leaving and with this present issue (after a hiatus of a year to get cranked up) we start afresh in new surroundings. A number of editorial changes have been made—in particular the selection of Michael Benedikt as the new poetry editor to follow the distinguished tenure of Tom Clark. But always we intend to keep to the original force of the magazine, to its emphasis on creative work to the exclusion of criticism—a policy which we hope will continue to find the support of an interested readership.

G. A. P.

Tan Salaam

Paul West

(*Brain Stem*: in evolutionary terms, an old and primitive part.)

His name is Tan Salaam, self-bestowed since he was dismissed from the Tanzanian civil service for illegally dealing in four elephant tusks. What his former name was I neither know nor care, I am too taken by his gleaming ebony face, the aloof equanimity in his eyes, the hair circlet around his shaven head. He looks not so much African as Oriental, not so much disgraced as called to a higher service. A candy-striped sheet wound round his trunk serves him as skirt, and an ordinary drip-dry shirt, several sizes too large, covers his upper body. Round his neck there is what once might have been a scarlet cummerbund, now faded into a bleached-looking pink, and his wrists are thin enough to fit into aluminum bracelets sliced from (I think) a Coca-Cola can, one on each. Off him comes an aroma I am not familiar with, a sweet stench that is pine and baby's diaper mixed. His nails are long enough to scoop out the contents of an egg and he has two moustaches, a conventional one

along his upper lip and a surprising one beneath his lower lip: a mouth rimmed with fur.

—The matter of the tusks, I say.

—Greed, he answers, which I have now put behind me, but with gratitude, for the tusks led me to my life's work. An augury, I think you would call it. You cannot learn anything without first submitting to disgrace, not that I had any such thing in mind when I began dealing in ivory. Far from it, but the privilege crept up on me. I was even unwilling. Nonetheless, I was *called* without asking for anything remotely similar, and now I am transformed. I am earlier, so^a to speak, than all priests, having no necessary doctrine; I am quite empirical, in that I rely upon experience only, and such experience as quite overwhelms; and I am, let's face it, wholly outrageous in that I excite just as much hate as admiration. According to my log, well over four thousand pilgrims have come to visit me, some of them even driving up in their Landrovers while on safari. To them I am a curiosity, but one that lingers in their minds; to others, adepts who might also have been to Tibet or Benares, I am an inspiration. For some time, after my downfall—which I now have come to regard as an essential step in my initiation— I wandered about the parklands, cursing their Director, a one-time big-game hunter turned conservationist, and resolving to have my revenge. I would, I told myself, turn ivory trader in a big way. Months I spent in such futile bickering with myself, almost like Job, and then, one day of unusual heat even for these treeless grasslands, I happened upon—no, that isn't the way to express it—I saw from a distance something that looked like a tall building, say the Post Office tower in London, or the United Nations Building in New York City, an eminence in a land where eminences are few and far between. So, naturally, I stopped, attributing the whole thing to a mirage, something brought on by a near-starvation diet and the fatigue of walking day after day. But the image didn't vanish; from about one hundred yards, if you allow for the

penance on that very spot. It was no doubt a reckless decision to make, but it wasn't a chance I was willing to forego.

—But, I protest, aren't there laws? Weren't there all kinds of practical difficulties? I mean, what about food and water, what about human contact?

He looks amused: It was right in the middle of the Serengeti, where you are allowed to destroy nothing, where all life is sacred. Everything is protected there, even a hill of elephant dung. And so it turned out. Plus the fact of the tourist trade, rising fifteen per cent annually if I remember aright. All I had to do was situate myself on top of the pile and the tourists would come. And a few devout followers would bring food and water, which they do. In fact, I have been up here for going on four years; my feet in all that time have not touched the earth once. The telephone! I see you glancing at it, as if you expect it to ring. To me, it is a symbol of useless communication. See (he holds up the receiver), I eat from it (the earpiece and mouthpiece are hollowed out to form minor cups).

—Here, the water, he says, there the food. I take in little, barely enough to keep body's rental paid, but I am well known for that. It would be too late to change now.

As if for the first time, I realize that, contrary to all my expectations, I am sitting on a cushion made of soft branches on top of a thirty-foot high pillar of dung in the center of the Serengeti grasslands, conversing with a self-made shaman, both of us almost enclosed in outsize flies and breathing almost pure stench in 120-degree heat. I marvel at man's power to adjust.

—*Tan Salaam*, I say, formally, what does *that* mean?

—Oh, he says, affably, that is a pair of local allusions—to the Tan in Tanzania, patriotic, you see, and to the Salaam—Arabic for peace—in Dar-es-Salaam, the capital. I call this the Peace Turret, and, if you will take the trouble to look down, through the flies, you will see something else.

shimmer of the heat on the land, it looked grey, shall I say granitic.

—Like a puy, I learnedly interject, or a menhir. A dolmen has two or more upright columns.

—As you prefer, he says smoothly. —So I approached, half-expecting the thing to disappear. But it didn't, and then I heard the buzz-buzz which you yourself hear at this very moment, and I apologize for that. Thousands of flies, like pursuit planes circling one of your skyscrapers. And a stench like the amalgamated sewers of all the cities in West Africa. To the touch it wasn't hard at all, nor yet soft, but buoyant like densely packed straw. What I had been drawn towards was a thirty-foot pile of elephant dung, assembled there for no reason I could even faintly imagine.

He leans forward towards the telephone on his trestle table and rests his chin on the base of his hand; the aluminum bangle slides down his arm half-way. (The phone will never ring for it is unconnected.)

—At first, he goes on, I imagined some human agency had put it all there for collection later—some new technique of making bricks, say, or a special load for one of the universities where they study conservation so relentlessly. But then I realized it had been amassed by the elephants themselves, shoving and heaving at the heap and then lobbing chunks of the stuff up higher and higher, and they smoothed the column with their trunks. It was as if they were erecting a cenotaph, something to compete with Kilimanjaro, or an elephant *kopje*, a parody of our small hills with granite boulders. And I told myself: Tan Salaam (although that wasn't my name then), you have been granted a mighty privilege. This is not just a dungheap of the elephants, it is a beacon, a pillar, a platform crying out for a Simon Stylites to mount it. Imagine the humility I had arrived at! Imagine the arrogance as well! Perhaps, I told myself, the elephants would return and knock it down. On the other hand, perhaps they had erected it to show that I, and only I, was forgiven—provided, of course, that I did

I do, but I don't believe it. Picture, if you will, a sailboat with green and white sail planked there in the middle of nowhere, no water in sight, with lions and zebras and buffaloes and giraffes and leopards and wildebeests and cheetahs and wild dogs and vultures and so on daily going past it, leaving it alone. It is as if a TV commercial has come home to roost: Special bargain covers delivery of a complete sailboat (pictured at right)—

Now I know where I have seen it, not on TV, but in some illustrated magazine bought at a newstand near the Chicago Loop.

—Including thirty-pound molded polystyrene hull, aluminum mast and spars, forty-five square-foot nylon sail, fittings, lines, rudder, centerboard and sailing instruction booklet. Allow six weeks for delivery. This offer expires December 31, 1971, is limited to the USA., and is open only to those 21 years of age or over.... I enclose a carton end flap from any size (some cigarette, I forget which) plus \$88.

—The Sea Kite, I say to him.—I've seen them!

—From an American admirer, he tells me.—He brought it with him on his second visit. I stare at it and it helps my mind to lift. You see, there is a special point to its presence: this is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited regions, so it is worth seeing how long it survives. So far, the only force to affect it has been the sun. It is two years old, it has been nowhere, of course, but it remains intact.

—Beautiful, I exclaim. What *else* can one say?

Agreeing, he offers me food, some kind of mash, but not in the telephone cup, not in either of them but in a dull-looking can that might once have contained soup.

—No thank you; it is as much as I can do to breathe up here. A green air of Africa, thirty feet up, with nary a breeze.

—But the smell, I begin to ask.

—I do not even notice it. Too, I accept the flies.

—Your own—

—With my own paltry droppings, I add to the mound. Shall we say a yard nearer heaven each year? I concede the crudeness of the platform, but I allow three or four tents down below in which my so-called followers can live. At the moment, I am quite alone; I have more visitors at weekends, and then I unroll this.

He fidgets with some strings and pegs, and a ten-foot-square banner on what looks like a tablecloth unrolls and settles. Peering over, I see a cross superimposed upon a swastika, black on grimy white.

—My emblem, he explains. I also have a small handbell (he rings it eerily in the chaffering stillness of the grassland) and a book to write in (a brown-bound spiral exercise book). At once he begins to read to me from it, but not before I see that the writing is copperplate, in brown fiber-point:

In two-score months and nine I have not bathed.

So: I have lost a tooth, my hair has grown gray,
and, lean and black as a hyena ravaged by hunger,
I am covered with scabies. Fortunately,

Being a stubborn and stoical man, never yielding,

Though I suffer in the body,

My spirit stands firm.

He must surely, I reflect, have read Ho Chi Minh's prison diary, and I wonder at his opportunism, ask him. No, he says, young men from America have climbed the ladder and read it to him, he regrets any seeming plagiarism.

—Do you, then, I ask him, have a creed? Do you propound beliefs that people can follow? Put into practice.

—None at all. Merely contemplation and meditation.

—A life of inaction?

—Precisely.

—Any day an elephant, even a herd of them, could bulldoze you down.

—Thus far, my son, they have not.

—And that is the essence of what you do?

—Their peace toward me, mine toward them. As well as all other creatures. The government indulges me: I am what is known as a tourist draw; I cost the government nothing; I harm nobody. I am picturesque.

—Money?

—I accept none, but only supplies. An occasional piece of soap, a toothpick, any kind of food.

—But the heat? It almost has me fainting.

—One adjusts. (I thought he was going to call me son again, but he doesn't.)

—And the point is peace?

—Not the word, but the experience of being vulnerably on top of a large amount of what most people would think disgusting. I think peacefully while nature piles up.

—Ah, then the elephants do not return?

—Not one ounce have they added. No, as I see it, the heap is complete; all it lacked was a tenant. Perhaps there are similar peace turrets all over the Serengeti, which is very vast, and I have not seen all of it.

—Will you ever come down?

—When death brings me.

—What about family?

—My wife in the capital city divorced me for desertion. An epiphany, you realize, is a lonely thing.

Dust in the distance attracts my eyes and he motions toward it: More visitors, he coos, almost implying I have to go.

—So, peace is here?

—Isn't it?

—I'm sorry, it all seems so contrived.

—As you wish. Spiritual beggars cannot be choosers. Imagine how I would feel if my destiny had been to sit in a burned-out Rolls-Royce in a suburb of Dar-es-Salaam, eventually doomed to douse myself with gasoline and become a human torch! My version is an *African* otherworldliness; it was Nature who provided my platform. With Nature I will stay.

Among other things, he tells me about helicopters that come to hover above him while tourists spin their movie cameras; vultures that greet him, so he says, with a concerted flap of wings during helices of squadron drill; lions that pause at the Sea Kite and bass-purr in greeting; the London journalist who wrote an article about him that he never saw; the honorary degree he eventually expects from one of the major African universities; the mild pain in his groin that might be a grumbling appendix; the days the blue of the sky seems to drain his eyes completely and he can discern, although only behind closed lids, while tiny cells flit across the irradiated screen of blood, the radar octopus of heaven, the all-registering. I, I look for the mouths of whiskey bottles embedded in the dried dung, for some sign of supplementary rations. Are none. He's true to what he says. Even giraffes don't molest him. Out there, he isn't even insanitary, only the exhaust of the landrovers and the minibusses. Unlike St. Paul, he wasn't called to service by fulguration, he just loitered around and struck gold. I prepare to go, eyes tingling with sweat's salt, throat parched, clothes sodden, and head pounding from the glare, even through the polaroid lenses.

—Remember, he says as I prepare to go down the rickety ladder, as many as forty thousand animals a year are poached in Tanzania's parks. A good zebra skin will fetch thirty to forty dollars, a leopard's up to two hundred. Peace isn't easily come by. A lioness has three or four cubs every two years, and if they all survived, there would be an unequal balance of lions to wildebeests, which have only one calf each year. So nature kills off some of the lion cubs, two or three of which can eat an entire gazelle in three or four days. Normally, the gazelle would have seven years of life. Some things are intended, others not. How long a stack of dung can last, nobody knows; perhaps this one is the first of many. Who knows? I intend to sit it out.

—Anything I can get for you? I feel contrite at being

still suspicious. What about laundry? Surely he shaves?

—The nights are cold, he answers; so, for them, I reserve warm thoughts—the daytime Serengeti; dreams of volcanoes; incendiary bombs on London; sun-bursts, high fevers.

Nodding, even though he cannot see me, I stand again on the braised ground, then walk away to my own land-rover. There he squats, on his stout stem of shit, unassailable in his African paradoxes, his Eastern elasticity, his English-type education that has fed him all the right words. It is as if he rides on a private Golden Fleece, trusting in the winds to land him in one piece, if ever. I have no doubt that, after five or ten or twenty years, if the dungheap endures, the vultures will one day topple his skeleton off the platform, but not until then will he touch the ground. Anyone who needs him will have to go up.

The Art of Poetry XVII

W.H. Auden



P. Kureth

AUDEN

What's that again?

INTERVIEWER

I wondered which living writer you would say has served as the prime protector of the integrity of our English tongue. . . ?

AUDEN

Why me, of course!

— Conversation, Autumn, 1972

He was sitting beneath two direct white lights of a plywood portico, drinking a large cup of strong breakfast coffee, chain-smoking cigarettes and doing the crossword puzzle which appears on the daily book review page of The New York Times — which, as it happened, this day contained along with his photo, a review of his most recent volume of poetry.

When he had completed the puzzle, he unfolded the paper, glanced at the obits and went to make toast.

Asked if he had read the review, Auden replied: “Of course not. Obviously these things are not meant for me. . .”

His singular perspectives, priorities and tastes, were strongly manifest in the decor of his New York apartment, which he used in the winter. Its three large high-ceilinged main rooms were painted dark grey, pale green and purple. On the wall hung drawings of friends — Elizabeth Bishop, E. M. Forster, Paul Valery, Chester Kallman — framed simply in gold. There was also an original Blake watercolor, The Act of Creation, in the dining room, as well as several line drawings of male nudes. On the floor of his bedroom, a portrait of himself, unframed, faced the wall.

The cavernous front living room, piled high with books, was left dark, except during his brief excursions into its many boxes of manuscripts, or for consultations with the Oxford English Dictionary.

Auden’s kitchen was long and narrow with many pots and pans hanging on the wall. He preferred such delicacies as tongue, tripe, brains and Polish sausage, ascribing the eating of beefsteak to the lower orders (it’s madly non-U!). He drank Smirnoff martinis, red wine and cognac, shunned pot, and confessed to having, under a doctor’s supervision, tried LSD: “Nothing much happened, but I did get the distinct impression that some birds were trying to communicate with me.”

His conversation was droll, intelligent and courtly, a sort

of humanistic global gossip, disinterested in the machinations of ambition, less interested in concrete poetry, absolutely exclusive of electronic influence.

As he once put it: "I just got back from Canada, where I had a run-in with McLuhan. I won."

INTERVIEWER

You've insisted we do this conversation without a tape recorder. Why?

AUDEN

Because I think if there's anything worth retaining, the reporter ought to be able to remember it. Truman Capote tells the story of the reporter whose machine broke down halfway into an interview. Truman waited while the man tried in vain to fix it, and finally asked if he could continue. The reporter said not to bother — he wasn't used to listening to what his subjects said!

INTERVIEWER

I thought your objection might have been to the instrument itself. You have written a new poem condemning the camera as an infernal machine.

AUDEN

Yes, it creates sorrow. Normally, when one passes someone on the street who is in pain, one either tries to help him, or one simply looks the other way. With a photo there's no human decision, you're not there; you can't turn away; you simply gape. It's a form of voyeurism. And I think close-ups are rude.

INTERVIEWER

Was there anything that you were particularly afraid of as a child? The Dark, Spiders, and so forth.

AUDEN

No, I wasn't very scared. Spiders certainly — but that's different, a personal phobia which persists through life. Spiders and Octopi. I was certainly never afraid of the dark.

INTERVIEWER

Were you a talkative child? I remember your describing somewhere the autistic quality of your private world.

AUDEN

Yes, I was talkative. Of course there were things in my private world that I couldn't share with others. But I always had a few good friends.

INTERVIEWER

When did you start writing poetry?

AUDEN

I think my own case may be rather odd. I was going to be a mining engineer or a geologist. Between the ages of six and twelve, I spent many hours of my time constructing a highly elaborate private world of my own based on, first of all, a landscape, the limestone moors of the Pennines; and secondly, an industry — lead mining. Now I found in doing this, I had to make certain rules for myself. I could choose between two machines necessary to do a job, but they had to be real ones I could find in catalogues. I could decide between two ways of draining a mine, but I wasn't allowed to use magical means. Then there came a day which later on, looking back, seems very important. I was planning my idea of the concentrating mill — you know, the platonic idea of what it should be. There were two kinds of machinery for separating the slime, one I thought more beautiful than the other, but the other one I knew to be more efficient. I felt myself faced with what I can only call a moral choice — it was my duty to take the second and

more efficient one. Later, I realized, in constructing this world which was only inhabited by me, I was already beginning to learn how poetry is written. Then, my final decision, which seemed to be fairly fortuitous at the time, took place in 1922, in March when I was walking across a field with a friend of mine from school who later became a painter. He asked me, "Do you ever write poetry?" and I said, "No" — I'd never thought of doing so. He said: "Why don't you?" — and at that point I decided that's what I would do. Looking back, I conceived how the ground had been prepared.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think of your reading as being an influence in your decision?

AUDEN

Well, up until then the only poetry I had read, as a child, were certain books of sick jokes — Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*, *Strubel Peter* by Hoffman, and Harry Graham's *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes*. I had a favorite, which went like this:

*Into the drinking well
The plumber built her
Aunt Maria fell;
We must buy a filter.*

Of course I read a good deal about geology and lead mining. Sopwith's *A Visit to Alston Moore*, was one, *Underground Life* was another. I can't remember who wrote it. I read all the books of Beatrix Potter, and also Lewis Carroll. Anderson's *The Snow Queen* I loved, and also Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*. And I got my start reading detective stories with Sherlock Holmes.

INTERVIEWER

Did you read much of Housman?

AUDEN

Yes, and later I knew him quite well. He told me a very funny story about Clarence Darrow. It seems that Darrow had written him a very laudatory letter, claiming to have saved several clients from the Chair with quotes from Housman's poetry. Shortly afterwards, Housman had a chance to meet Darrow. They had a very nice meeting, and Darrow produced the trial transcripts he had alluded to. "Sure enough" Housman told me, "There were two of my poems — both misquoted!" These are the minor headaches a writer must live with. My pet peeve is people who send for autographs but omit putting in stamps.

INTERVIEWER

Did you meet Christopher Isherwood at school?

AUDEN

Yes, I've known him since I was eight and he was ten, because we were both in boarding-school together at St. Edmund's School, Hindhead, Surrey. We've known each other ever since. I always remember the first time I ever heard a remark which I decided was witty. I was walking with Mr. Isherwood on a Sunday walk — this was in Surrey — and Christopher said, "I think God must have been tired when He made this country." That's the first time I heard a remark that I thought was witty.

INTERVIEWER

Did you have good teachers?

AUDEN

Except in Mathematics, I had the good luck to have excellent teachers, especially in Science. When I went up for my *viva*, Julian Huxley showed me a bone and asked me to tell him what it was. "The pelvis of a bird," I said, which happened to be the right answer. He said: "Some people have said it was the skull of an extinct reptile."

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever taught writing?

AUDEN

No, I never have. If I had to “teach poetry” which, thank God, I don’t, I would concentrate on prosody, rhetoric, philology, and learning poems by heart. I may be quite wrong, but I don’t see what can be learned except purely technical things—what a sonnet is, something about prosody. If you did have a poetic academy, the subjects should be quite different—natural history, history, theology, all kinds of other things. When I’ve been at colleges, I’ve always insisted on giving ordinary academic courses—on the 18th Century, or Romanticism. True, it’s wonderful what the colleges have done as patrons of the artists. But the artists should agree not to have anything to do with contemporary literature. If they take academic positions, they should do academic work, and the further they get away from the kind of thing that directly affects what they’re writing, the better. They should teach the 18th Century, or something that won’t interfere with their work and yet earn them a living. To teach Creative Writing—I think that’s dangerous. The only possibility I can conceive of is an apprentice system like those they had in the Renaissance—where a poet who was very busy got students to finish his poems for him. Then you’d *really* be teaching, and you’d be responsible, of course, since the results would go out under the poet’s name.

INTERVIEWER

I noticed that in your early works, there seems to be a fierceness towards England. There’s a sense of being at war with where you are — and that this is lacking in poems you’ve written here in the United States: that you seem more at home.

AUDEN

Yes, quite. I'm sure it's partly a matter of age. You know, everybody changes. It's frightfully important for a writer to be his age, not to be younger or older than he is. One might ask, "What should I write at the age of 64," but never "What should I write in 1940." It's always a problem, I think.

INTERVIEWER

Is there a certain age when a writer is at the height of his powers?

AUDEN

Some poets, like Wordsworth, peter out fairly early. Some, like Yeats, have done their best work late in life. Nothing is calculable. Aging has its problems, but they must be accepted without fuss.

INTERVIEWER

What made you choose the U. S. as a home?

AUDEN

Well, the difficulty about England is the cultural life — it *was* certainly dim and I suspect it still is. In a sense it's the same difficulty one faces with some kinds of family life. I love my family very dearly, but I don't want to live with them.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see any demarcation between the language you use since you came to America, and the language you used in England?

AUDEN

No, not really. Obviously you see little things, particularly when writing prose: very minor things. There are certain rhymes which could not be accepted in England.

You would rhyme “clerk” and “work” here, which you can’t in England. But these are minor — saying “twenty of” instead of “twenty to” or “aside from” instead of “apart from.”

INTERVIEWER

How long have you lived here, and where in America were you before taking this apartment?

AUDEN

I’ve been here since ’52. I came to America in ’39. I lived first in Brooklyn Heights, then taught for a while in Ann Arbor, then at Swarthmore. I did a stint in the Army, with the *U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey*. The Army didn’t like our report at all, because we proved that, in spite of all of our bombing of Germany, their weapons production didn’t go down until after they had lost the war. It’s the same in North Vietnam — the bombing does no good. But you know how Army people are. They don’t like to hear things that run contrary to what they’ve thought.

INTERVIEWER

Have you had much contact with men in politics and government?

AUDEN

I have had very little contact with such men. I knew some undergraduates, of course, while I was at Oxford, who eventually made it — Hugh Gaitskell, Crossman, and so forth. I think we should do very well without politicians. Our leaders should be elected by lot. The people could vote their conscience, and the computers could take care of the rest.

INTERVIEWER

How about writers as leaders? Yeats, for instance, held office.

AUDEN

And he was terrible! Writers seldom make good leaders. They're self-employed, for one thing, and they have very little contact with their customers. It's very easy for a writer to be unrealistic. I have not lost my interest in politics, but I have come to realise that, in cases of social or political injustice, only two things are effective: political action and straight journalistic reportage of the facts. The arts can do nothing. The social and political history of Europe would be what it has been if Dant , Shakespeare, Michaelangelo, Mozart, et. al., had never lived. A poet, *qua* poet, has only one political duty, namely, in his own writing to set an example of the correct use of his mother-tongue which is always being corrupted. When words lose their meaning, physical force takes over. By all means, let a poet, if he wants to, write what is now called an '*engag *' poem, so long as he realises that it is mainly himself who will benefit from it. It will enhance his literary reputation among those who feel the same as he does.

INTERVIEWER

Does this current deterioration and corruption of language, imprecision of thought, and so forth scare you — or is it just a decadent phase?

AUDEN

It terrifies me. I try by my personal example to fight it; as I say, it's a poet's role to maintain the sacredness of language.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the present condition of our civilization will be seen by the future, if there is one, as a pre-war decadence?

AUDEN

No, I don't think it has anything to do with the fact of another war. But in the old days people knew what the words meant, whatever the range of their vocabulary. Now people hear and repeat a radio and TV vocabulary 30 per cent larger than they know the meaning of. The most outrageous use of words I've ever experienced was once when I was a guest on the David Susskind TV program. During a break he had to do a plug for some sort of investment firm, and he announced that these people were "integrity-ridden!" I could not believe my ears!

INTERVIEWER

You have said bad art is bad in a very contemporary way.

AUDEN

Yes. Of course one can be wrong about what is good or bad. Taste and judgement can differ. But one has to be loyal to oneself, and trust one's own taste. I can, for instance, enjoy a good tear-jerking movie, where, oh, an old mother is put away in a home — even though I know it's terrible, the tears will run down my cheeks. I don't think good work ever makes one cry. Housman said he got a curious physical sensation with good poetry — I never got any. If one sees *King Lear* one doesn't cry. One doesn't have to.

INTERVIEWER

You have said that the story of your patron Saint Wystan was rather Hamlet-like. Are you a Hamlet-poet?

AUDEN

No, I couldn't be less. For myself I find that Shakespeare's greatest influence has been his use of a large vocabulary. One thing that makes English so marvelous for poetry is its great range, and the fact that it is an unin-

flected language. One can turn verbs into nouns and vice-versa, as Shakespeare did. One cannot do this with inflected languages such as German, French, Italian.

INTERVIEWER

In the early thirties, did you write for an audience that you wanted to jolt into awareness?

AUDEN

No, I just try to put the thing out and hope somebody will read it. Someone says: "Whom do you write for?" I reply: "Do you read me?" If they say "Yes," I say, "Do you like it?" If they say "No," then I say "I don't write for you."

INTERVIEWER

Well, then, do you think of a particular audience when writing certain poems?

AUDEN

Well, you know it's impossible to tell. If you have someone in mind. . . well, most of them are probably dead. You wonder whether they'll approve or not, and then you hope—that somebody will even read you after you're dead *yourself*.

INTERVIEWER

You have always been a formalist. Today's poets seem to prefer free verse. Do you think that's an aversion to discipline?

AUDEN

Unfortunately that's too often the case. But I can't understand — strictly from a hedonistic point of view — how one can enjoy writing with no form at all. If one plays a game, one needs rules, otherwise there is no fun. The wildest poem has to have a firm basis in common sense, and

this, I think, is the advantage of formal verse. Aside from the obvious corrective advantages, formal verse frees one from the fetters of one's ego. Here I like to quote Valéry, who said a person is a poet if his imagination is stimulated by the difficulties inherent in his art, and *not* if his imagination is dulled by them. I think very few people can manage free verse — you need an infallible ear, like D. H. Lawrence, to determine where the lines should end.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any poets you've read who have seemed to you to be kindred spirits? I'm thinking of Campion here, with whom you share a great fascination with metrics.

AUDEN

Yes, I do have several pets, and Campion is certainly among them. Also George Herbert and William Bonds, and yes, all shared a certain interest in metrics. These are the poets I should have liked to have had as friends. As great a poet as Danté might have been, I wouldn't have had the slightest wish to have known him personally. He was a terrible *prima donna*.

INTERVIEWER

Can you say something about the genesis of a poem? What comes first?

AUDEN

At any given time, I have two things on my mind: a theme that interests me, and a problem of verbal Form, metre, diction, etc. The Theme looks for the right Form: the Form looks for the right Theme. When the two come together I am able to start writing.

INTERVIEWER

Do you start your poems at the beginning?

AUDEN

Usually, of course, one starts at the beginning, and works through to the end. Sometimes, though, one starts with a certain line in mind, perhaps a last line. One starts, I think, with a certain idea of thematic organization, but this usually alters during the process of writing.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any aids for inspiration?

AUDEN

I never write when I'm drunk. Why should one need aids? The Muse is a high-spirited girl, who doesn't like to be brutally or coarsely wooed. And she doesn't like slavish devotion — then she lies.

INTERVIEWER

And comes up with *moon-faced Nonsense, that erudite forger*, as you said in one of your *Bucolics*.

AUDEN

Quite. Poetry is not self-expression. Each of us, of course, has a unique perspective, which we hope to communicate. We hope that someone reading it will say, "Of course, I knew that all the time, but never realized it before." On the whole I agree here with Chesterton, who said "*the artistic temperament is a disease that affects amateurs.*"

INTERVIEWER

Many poets are night-workers, manic, irregular in their habits.

AUDEN

Sorry, my dear, one mustn't be bohemian!

INTERVIEWER

Why do you disapprove of the recent publication of Eliot's *Waste Land* drafts?

AUDEN

Because there's not a line he left out which makes one wish he'd kept it. I think this sort of thing encourages amateurs to think, "Oh, look — I could have done as well." I think it shameful that people will spend more for a draft than for a completed poem. Valerie Eliot didn't like having to publish the drafts, but, once they were discovered, she knew they would have to come out eventually — so she did it herself to insure that it was done as well as possible.

INTERVIEWER

But isn't there some truth to be had from the knowledge that a poet does quite literally start in the "foul rag and bone shop of the heart?"

AUDEN

It may be necessary for him to start there, but there is no reason for others to pay it a visit. Here I like the quote of Valery, which says that when people don't know anything else they take their clothes off.

INTERVIEWER

In your *Commonplace Book* you've written: Behaviorism works — so does torture.

AUDEN

It does work. But I'm sure if I were given Professor B. F. Skinner, and supplied with the proper drugs and appliances, I could have him in a week reciting the Athanasian Code — in public. The problem with the behaviorists is that they always manage to exclude themselves from their theories. If all our acts are conditioned behavior, surely our theories are too.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see any spirituality in all those hippies out on St. Marks Place? You've lived among them for some time now.

AUDEN

I don't know any of them, so how could I tell? What I do like about them is that they have tried to revive the spirit of *Carnival*, something which has been conspicuously lacking in our culture. But I'm afraid that when they renounce work entirely, the fun turns ugly.

INTERVIEWER

Your new poem *Circe* deals with this subject, particularly:

*She does not brutalise her victims (beasts could
bolt or bite). She simplifies them to flowers,
sessile fatalists, who don't mind and only
can talk to themselves.*

Obviously you know that generation better than you admit.

AUDEN

I must say that I do admire the ones who won't compete in the rat-race, who renounce money and worldly goods. I couldn't do that, I'm far too worldly.

INTERVIEWER

Do you own any credit cards?

AUDEN

One. I never use it if I can help it. I've used it only once, in Israel, to pay a hotel bill. I was brought up believing that you should not buy anything you cannot pay cash for. The idea of debt appalls me. I suppose our whole economy would collapse if everyone had been brought up like me.

INTERVIEWER

Are you a good businessman — do you drive a hard bargain, and so forth?

AUDEN

No. That's not a subject I care to think about.

INTERVIEWER

But you do get what you can for your poetry. I was surprised the other day to see a poem of yours in *Poetry* — which only pays 50 cents a line.

AUDEN

Of course I get what I can — who wouldn't? I think I got my check from them the other day and used it up before I noticed I'd gotten it.

INTERVIEWER

Are you a gourmet?

AUDEN

I'm very fond of my food. I'm lucky when I'm in Austria, because my friend Mr. Kallman is an expert chef, so I'm rather spoiled in the summer. It's different here where I live alone. Sometimes when one is cooking for oneself, one gets a craze for something. Once I had a craze for turnips. But with solitary eating one doesn't like to spend much time, and simply gobbles it up fast. Certainly I like good wine, but I don't make a thing of it. There's a red table wine, *Valpolicella*, which I like to drink both when I'm in Austria and when I'm here. It travels much better than *Chianti* which, when you drink it here, always tastes like red ink.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever miss a meal while in the process of writing?

AUDEN

No. I live by my watch. I wouldn't know to be hungry if I didn't have my watch on!

INTERVIEWER

What are the worst lines you know — preferably by a great poet?

AUDEN

I think they occur in Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts*, in which Napoleon tries to escape from Elbe. There's a quatrain which goes like this:

*Should the corvette arrive
With the aging Scotch colonel,
Escape would be frustrate,
Retention eternal.*

That's pretty hard to beat!

INTERVIEWER

How about Yeats'

Had de Valera eaten Parnell's heart

or Eliot's

Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?

AUDEN

Those aren't bad, really, just unintentionally comic. Both would have made wonderful captions for a Thurber cartoon. As an undergraduate at Oxford I came up with one:

*Isobel with her leaping breasts
Pursued me through a summer*

Think what a marvellous cartoon Thurber could have done to that! Whoops! Whoops! Whoops!

INTERVIEWER

What's your least favorite Auden poem?

AUDEN

September 1, 1939. And I'm afraid it's gotten into a lot of anthologies.

INTERVIEWER

Of which poem are you proudest?

AUDEN

It occurs in my commentary on Shakespeare's *Tempest*, a poem written in prose, a pastiche of the late Henry James—*Caliban's Speech to the Audience*.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever finished a book you've hated?

AUDEN

No, I've skipped. . . actually I did, once. I read the whole of *Mein Kampf* because it was necessary to know what he thought. But it was not a pleasure.

INTERVIEWER

Have you reviewed a book you've hated?

AUDEN

Very rarely. Unless one is a regular reviewer, or one is reviewing a book of reference where the facts are wrong — then it's one's duty to inform the public, as one would warn them of watered milk. Writing nasty reviews can be fun, but I don't think the practice is very good for the character.

INTERVIEWER

What's the nicest poetic compliment you've ever received?

AUDEN

It came in a most unusual way. A friend of mine,

Dorothy Day, had been put in the women's prison at 6th Avenue and 8th Street, for her part in a protest. Well, once a week at this place, on a Saturday, the girls were marched down for a shower. A group were being ushered in when one, a whore, loudly proclaimed:

*Hundreds have lived without love,
But none without water*

A line from a poem of mine which had just appeared in *The New Yorker*. When I heard this I knew I hadn't written in vain!

INTERVIEWER

Have you read any books on Women's Lib?

AUDEN

I'm a bit puzzled by it. Certainly they ought to complain about the ad things, like ladies' underwear, and so forth.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any essential differences between male and female poetry?

AUDEN

Men and women have opposite difficulties to contend with. The difficulty for a man is to avoid being an aesthete — to avoid saying things not because they are true, but because they are poetically effective. The difficulty for a woman is in getting sufficient distance from the emotions. No woman is an aesthete. No woman ever wrote nonsense verse. Men are playboys, women realists. If you tell a funny story — only a woman will ever ask: "Did it really happen?" I think if men knew what women said to each other about them, the human race would die out.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think it would be better if women ran the

human race?

AUDEN

I think foreign policy should definitely be taken out of men's hands. Men should continue making machines, but women ought to decide which machines ought to be made. Women have far better sense. They would never have introduced the internal combustion engine, or any of the evil machines. Most kitchen machines, for example, are good; they don't obliterate other skills. Or other people. With our leaders it is all too often a case of one's little boy saying to another, "My father can lick your father." By now, the toys have gotten far too dangerous.

INTERVIEWER

Have you known any madmen?

AUDEN

Well, of course, I've known people who went off their heads. We all have. People who go into the bin and out again. I've known several people who were manic-depressives. I've often thought a lot of good could be done for them if they would organize a manic-depressives anonymous. They could get together and do each other some good.

INTERVIEWER

I don't think it would work.

AUDEN

Well, everybody has their ups and downs!

INTERVIEWER

If you were to go mad, what do you think your madness would be?

AUDEN

I couldn't imagine going mad. It's simply something my imagination cannot take. One can be dotty — but that's different! There's a very funny book called: *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti*, about a hospital in which there are three gents, all of whom believe themselves to be the Lord. Which is common enough, except in the case of one — who had actually found a disciple!

INTERVIEWER

What about collaboration? Did you ever go through your poems with T. S. Eliot?

AUDEN

No, one can't expect other people to do such things. He was very good to me; he encouraged me. He wasn't jealous of other writers. I had met him just before I left Oxford. I'd sent him some poems and he asked me to come to see him. He published the first thing of mine that was published—it was *Paid On Both Sides*—which came out in *The Criterion* in '28 or '29.

INTERVIEWER

Was Isherwood helpful at this time?

AUDEN

Oh, enormously. Of course one depends at that age on one's friends; one reads one's work and they criticize it. That's the same in every generation.

INTERVIEWER

Did you collaborate with him at this point, at Oxford?

AUDEN

The first time I collaborated with Isherwood must have been in '33 or '34 — *The Dog Beneath the Skin*. I've always enjoyed collaborating very much. It's exciting. Of

course, you can't collaborate on a particular poem. You can collaborate on a translation, or a libretto, or a drama, and I like working that way though you can only do it with people whose basic ideas you share — each can then sort of excite the other. When a collaboration works, the two people concerned become a third person, who is different from either of them in isolation. I have observed that, when critics attempt to say who wrote what, they often get it wrong. Of course, any performed work is bound to be a collaboration anyway, because you're going to have performers and producers and God knows what.

INTERVIEWER

How do you look back now on the early plays you wrote with Isherwood?

AUDEN

None of them will quite do, I think. I have a private weakness for *Dogskin*, which I think, if properly done, is fun, except that you have to cut all the choruses. There is some quite nice poetry in there, but dramatically it won't do. This was something that was just selfish on my part, wanting to write some poetry which had nothing to do, really, with drama.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel that the state of the theatre today is conducive to poetic drama?

AUDEN

The difficulty, I think, is that the tradition of actors and verse has been so lost. In opera for example, the whole tradition of singing has never stopped. The trouble with people who write official poetic drama — drama written in verse — is that they can default so easily either by writing something which is so nearly prose that it might just as well *be* prose — or something which is not theatrical. Ac-

tually, Mr. Kallman and I had a very interesting experience. We'd done a translation of *The Magic Flute* for NBC television, and we decided to put the spoken interludes into couplets. Nearly everybody in the cast, of course, were singers. . . who had never spoken verse before; there was only one part played by a professional actor. With the singers, we could teach them immediately how to speak verse. The singers who had never spoken verse before, could get it in ten minutes because they knew what a beat was. But we had awful trouble with the professional actor.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel that the conventions of acting in the American theatre destroy this ability to speak a line even more?

AUDEN

They won't keep still, of course. It's like a football match. Poetry is very unnaturalistic. One of the great things about opera singing is that you cannot pretend it's naturalistic.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel an opera libretto is limiting — that it requires sacrifices. . . ?

AUDEN

Well, yes. Of course, you have to forget all about what you ordinarily mean by writing poetry when you're writing poetry to be read or spoken or sung. It's a completely different art. Naturally, one's subordinate to the composer. And one's judged, really, by how much one stimulates him. But that's half the fun of it: being limited. Something you think of, which in cold blood, would be absolute trash, suddenly, when it is sung, becomes interesting. And vice versa.

INTERVIEWER

Which harks back to Addison's remark about Italian opera in London at the turn of the eighteenth century — that whatever is too stupid to say can be sung.

AUDEN

Well, it's not quite true — particularly these days when composers are much more dependent on the quality of the libretto than they were. It has been true ever since Strauss and Hofmannsthal that the librettist isn't a pure flunky.

INTERVIEWER

How did the collaboration of *The Rake's Progress* proceed?

AUDEN

Mr. Kallman and I prepared the libretto beforehand, though I talked to Mr. Stravinsky first, and we got some idea of the kind of thing he wanted to do. What had excited him was an idea that he felt would be an interesting subject for an opera. It was the last Hogarth scene in *Bedlam* where there was a blond man with a sort of broken fiddle. Now, actually, Stravinsky never used this, but intuitively, he thought, "Now this is an interesting idea." In the end it wasn't used at all.

INTERVIEWER

Could you characterize your working relationship with Stravinsky.

AUDEN

He was always completely professional. He took what I sent him and set it to music. He always took enormous trouble to find out what the rhythmic values were, which must have been difficult for him, since prior to my working with him he had never set in English.

INTERVIEWER

Did you correspond as did Strauss and Hofmannsthal?

AUDEN

No. The funny thing about their correspondence — which we're very fortunate to have — was that they chose to work through the mails because they couldn't stand one another!

INTERVIEWER

Did you and Stravinsky discuss the work over the phone?

AUDEN

No, I don't like the phone very much, and never stay on long if I can help it. You get some people who simply will not get off the line! I remember the story of the man who answered the phone and was kept prisoner for what seemed an age. The lady talked and talked. Finally, in desperation, he told her, "Really, I must go. I hear the phone ringing!"

INTERVIEWER

What is your Hans Werner Henze opera about?

AUDEN

It's about the early Twentieth Century sort of artist-genius who, in order to get his work done, must exploit other people. A sort of real monster. A poet. It is set in an Austrian mountain inn in the year 1910. There was an amusing mix-up about its title, *Elegy for Young Lovers*, which appeared on a lawyer's power-of-attorney document as *Allergy for Young Lovers*.

INTERVIEWER

Did you involve yourself in its production?

AUDEN

Naturally. As much as I was allowed to, which with modern stage directors is not always easy.

INTERVIEWER

Do you enjoy all the ruckus?

AUDEN

Yes, I do. I'm terribly short-tempered.

INTERVIEWER

Does poetry contain music?

AUDEN

One can speak of verbal "music" so long as one remembers that the sound of words is inseparable from their meaning. The notes in music do not denote anything.

INTERVIEWER

What is the difference in your aims, when you write a piece of verse which is to be set to music? Is there a difference in your method?

AUDEN

In writing words to be set to music, one has to remember that, probably, only one word in three will be heard. So, one must avoid complicated imagery. Suitable are verbs of motion, interjections, lists and nouns like Moon, Sea, Love, Death.

INTERVIEWER

You wrote the U.N. anthem to be set by Casals. What were your aims and methods there?

AUDEN

The problem in writing the U.N. theme, in which one must not offend anybody's conception of Man, Nature,

the world, was how to avoid the most dreary clichés. I decided that the only thing to do was to make all the imagery musical, for Music, unlike Language, is international. Casals and I corresponded, and he was extremely generous about altering his music if, as once or twice, I felt he had accented syllables wrongly.

INTERVIEWER

Where did you pick up your interest in the Icelandic Sagas?

AUDEN

My father brought me up on them. His family originated in an area which once served as headquarters for the Viking Army. The name *Auden* is common in the Sagas, usually spelled *Audun*. But we have no family-trees or anything like that. My mother came from Normandy — which means that she was half-Nordic, as the Normans were. I had an ancestor named Birch, who married Constable. The family, I understand, was furious that she had married a painter. I've seen some of his portraits of her — she must have been quite beautiful. I've another relative who's married to a Hindu. This goes along better, I think, with the family line, which says that either one marries an Englishman — or one marries a Brahmin!

INTERVIEWER

And your father was a doctor?

AUDEN

Yes, he was. But at the time my mother married him, medicine was not considered one of the respectable professions. One of her aunts told her shortly before the wedding, "Well, marry him if you must, but no one will call on you!"

INTERVIEWER

You believe in class distinctions, then, social forms and formats?

AUDEN

To a degree, yes; one talks to people one has something to say to — it keeps things running a bit more smoothly. And I think the first prerequisite to Civilization is an ability to make polite conversation.

INTERVIEWER

Many artists and writers either join the media or use its techniques in composing or editing their work.

AUDEN

It certainly has never tempted me. I suppose with some people like Norman Mailer it works out all right. Personally I don't see how any civilized person can watch TV, far less own a set. I prefer detective stories, especially Father Brown. I also don't particularly care for science fiction. I read some Jules Verne in my youth, but I'm not very interested in other planets. I like them where they are, in the sky.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any media which to you are strictly taboo?

AUDEN

Yes: TV, all movies except the comic ones — Charlie Chaplin and the Marx Brothers were quite funny — and rock and roll, all are taboo for me.

INTERVIEWER

Newspapers?

AUDEN

They're painful, but one has to read them to know

whatever is happening. I try to get through them as soon as possible. It's never very pleasant in the morning to open *The New York Times*.

INTERVIEWER

Have you read, or tried to read, *Finnegans Wake*?

AUDEN

I'm not very good on Joyce. Obviously he's a very great genius — but his work is simply too long. Joyce said himself that he wanted people to spend their life on his work. For me life is too short, and too precious. I feel the same way about *Ulysses*. Also, *Finnegans Wake* can't be read the way one reads ordinarily. You can dip in, but I don't think anyone could read it straight through and remember what happened. It's different in small doses. I remember when *Anna Livia Plurabelle* came out, published separately, I was able to get through it, and enjoy it. On the whole I like novels to be short, and funny. There are a few exceptions, of course; one knows with Proust, for instance, that it couldn't have been any shorter. I suppose my favorite modern novelists are Ronald Firbank and P. G. Wodehouse — because both deal with Eden.

INTERVIEWER

Are you aware, by the way, that you are mentioned on page 279 of *Finnegans Wake*?

AUDEN

That I know. I could not have given you the page number — but I have seen the footnote.

INTERVIEWER

Would you care to comment on Yeats?

AUDEN

I find it very difficult to be fair to Yeats because he had

a bad influence on me. He tempted me into a rhetoric which was, for me, oversimplified. Needless to say, the fault was mine, not his. He was, of course, a very great poet. But he and Rilke had a bad effect on me, so it's difficult for me to judge either fairly.

INTERVIEWER

What about Eliot's influence?

AUDEN

Eliot can have very little direct stylistic influence on other poets, actually. What I mean is that it is very rare that one comes across a poem and can say, "Ah, he's been reading Eliot." One can with Yeats or Rilke, but not with Eliot. He's a very idiosyncratic poet, and not imitable. My work is much easier to use as a stylistic model. And I don't say this about Eliot in any pejorative sense at all. It's the same with Gerard Manley Hopkins — both are extremely idiosyncratic, and cannot readily be adapted to one's own sensibility. When it's attempted, what you end up with is simply Hopkins-and-water.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think *Gerontion* is Eliot's greatest poem?

AUDEN

Again, this idea of choosing. Why should one? Obviously, one wants a lot of them.

INTERVIEWER

Well then do you think *Gerontion* is a very mystical poem?

AUDEN

I'm not sure if "mystical" is quite the right word. Certainly a part of his work is based on a rather peculiar vision he's had. That's part of why he's so idiosyncratic. Probably

something in his early youth. Here I think a comment he made about Dant  s Beatrice is very revealing. Although Dant   claimed to have been nine when he met her, Eliot was sure they must have met at a still earlier age. I think that's very revealing about Eliot. And all those images of children swinging from apple trees. . . must refer to some very powerful early vision. But he wasn't a confessional poet, so we don't know who it was.

INTERVIEWER

Eliot was purportedly influenced in that direction by the poetry of St. John of the Cross, which we can safely say is mystical. Do you read him much?

AUDEN

His poetry is very remarkable, but not exactly my cup of tea. Essentially because I don't think the mystical experience can be verbalized. When the ego disappears, so does power over language. I must say that he was extremely daring — he uses the most daring metaphors for orgasm. This probably has to do with the fact that in both cases, orgasm and mystical union, the ego is forgotten.

INTERVIEWER

Do you spend much time on affairs of the Church?

AUDEN

No — apart from going on Sundays.

INTERVIEWER

But you do have a reputation in theological circles; you've had some doings with *The Guild of Episcopal Scholars*.

AUDEN

Oh, that just had to do with some advice they wanted on the revision of the *Psalms*. Actually I'm passionately

anti-liturgical-reform, and would have *The Book of Common Prayer* kept in Latin. Rite is the link between the dead and the unborn, and needs a timeless language, which in practice means a dead language. I'm curious to know what problems they are having in Isreal, where they speak what was long an unspoken language.

INTERVIEWER

Do you speak Hebrew?

AUDEN

No, I wish I knew it. Obviously it's a marvellous language. Something else I wish we had in my Church is the *Seder*. I've been to one or two, and was enormously impressed. We don't have anything like that. *The Last Supper* is a communal thing, but not a family thing.

INTERVIEWER

What about the rites of marriage?

AUDEN

Well, I'm perfectly congenial to the idea of weddings, but what I think ruins so many marriages, though, is this romantic idea of falling in love. It happens, of course, I suppose to some people who are possessed of unusually fertile imaginations. Undoubtedly it is a mystical experience which occurs. But with most people who think they are in love I think the situation can be described far more simply, and, I'm afraid, brutally. The trouble with all this love business is one or the other partner ends up feeling bad or guilty because they don't have it the way they've read it. I'm afraid things went off a lot more happily when marriages were arranged by parents. I do think it is absolutely essential that both partners share a sense of humor, and an outlook on life. And, with Goethe, I think marriages should be celebrated more quietly and humbly, because they are the beginning of something. Loud cele-

brations should be saved for successful conclusions.

INTERVIEWER

What is that big book over there?

AUDEN

It's Goethe's autobiography. It's amazing. If I were asked to do an autobiography of my first 26 years, I don't think I could fill up 60 pages. And here Goethe fills up 800! Personally I'm interested in history, but not in the past. I'm interested in the present and in the next 24 hours.

INTERVIEWER

What's the name of your cat?

AUDEN

I haven't got any now.

INTERVIEWER

What about Mosé?

AUDEN

Mosé was a dog.

INTERVIEWER

Who was Rolfi Strobl?

AUDEN

Our housekeeper's dog, an Alsation. There must have been a bitch in the neighborhood, because the poor thing ran out on the Autobahn one day and was run over. We had a very funny experience with Mosé one time. We had gone to Venice for the opening of *The Rake's Progress*, which was being broadcast over the radio. Mosé was staying with some friends at the time, who were listening in. The minute my voice came over the airwaves, Mosé's ears

Last night, sucked giddy down
 The funnel of my dream,
 I saw myself within
 A buried engine-room.
 Dynamos, boilers, lay
 In tickling silence, I,
 Gripping an oily rail,
 Talked feverishly with an ^{to me}
~~hare-lipped philosopher,~~
~~who spluttered "Is that all?",~~
~~And winked a lecher's eye,~~
~~"Puella defututa"~~
~~And laughed himself away.~~

Professional listener

*Who ~~of better~~ ~~practices~~ ~~with~~ ~~and~~ ~~has~~
 In ecstasy of pain
 I know, ^{I know} I know,
 And reached his hand for mine.*

W. H. Auden manuscript, page 2 of Poem II
 ("I chose this lean country") from Poems (1928)
 from the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection
 The New York Public Library
 Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

perked up, and he ran over to the speaker — just like *His Master's Voice!*

INTERVIEWER

What happened to your cats?

AUDEN

They had to be put away because our housekeeper died. They too were named from opera, Rudimace and Leonora. Cats can be very funny too, and have the oddest ways of showing they're glad to see you. Rudimace always peed in our shoes.

INTERVIEWER

And then there's your new poem, *Talking to Mice*. Have you any favorite mythological mice?

AUDEN

Mythological! What on earth could you be referring to? Are there any, aside from Mickey Mouse? You must mean fictional mice!

INTERVIEWER

I must.

AUDEN

Oh yes, there's the mice of Beatrix Potter, of which I'm quite fond.

INTERVIEWER

How about Mickey?

AUDEN

He's all right.

INTERVIEWER

In Austria you live on *Audenstrasse*. Do your neighbors

know who you are?

AUDEN

My neighbors there know I'm a poet. The village I live in was the home of a famous Austrian poet, Joseph Weinheber, so they're used to having a poet around the place. He committed suicide in '45.

INTERVIEWER

How about your neighbors here?

AUDEN

I don't know. My stock went up last year, I know. There was a feature on me in the *Daily News* — which everyone here seems to read. After that they figured I must be somebody. It was very nice to get all that attention.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think writers receive more respect abroad than here?

AUDEN

I wouldn't say so. I've told people I'm a medieval historian, when asked what I do. It freezes conversation. If one tells them one's a poet, one gets these odd looks which seem to say, "Well, what's he living off?" In the old days a man was proud to have in his passport, Occupation: Gentleman. Lord Antrim's passport simply said, Occupation: Peer — which I felt was correct. I've had a lucky life, I had a happy home, and my parents provided me with a good education. And my father was both a physician and a scholar, so I never got the idea that art and science were opposing cultures — both were entertained equally in my home. I cannot complain. I've never had to do anything I really disliked. Certainly I've had to do various jobs I would not have taken on if I'd had the money; but I've

always considered myself a worker, not a laborer. So many people have jobs they don't like at all. I haven't, and I'm grateful for that.

—MICHAEL NEWMAN

Stephen Sossaman

The My Tho Laundry

Yes these are mine

I carry them from shower to dreams

and sniff them in dark dawns

I find them in my food

they cling like cigarette smoke in hair

and clog pores like dead skin,

these gray stenchs of all my dead,

stinking like sweatsoaked fatigues.

Frailbodied old women in black,

the My Tho laundry Mama Sans fold

them quietly, still stiff and unclean,

and leave them on my cot unsmiling.

Elena Wilkinson

After the Loss of a Limb

After the family surgeon has severed my hand and wrist
from the forearm,
And I have carefully washed the separated hand with
the connected hand,
And done its fingernails, and put a drop of perfume at
the pulse of the wrist,
And soothed the hand, and stroked it, and spoken to it
Until it understands everything, why the operation
was necessary,
And I have kissed each finger before picking it up by
the thumb
And packing it with colored tissue in a nice box,
And with some difficulty wrapped it and sent it away,
And when you receive the package and open the box
and find
That I have sent you my hand, my wrist, and the first
three inches of my forearm,
You must care for the fingernails, clean them and
polish them,
Brood over them so they grow long and pretty,
You must massage the skin with cream to keep it soft,
and perfume the wrist,
You must be considerate and make it feel it is a member
of the family,
Taking no notice of whoever may watch you as you wash
or touch or speak to my hand,
And advise you to bury the thing, or use it as a paperweight
or objet d'art,
Or tell you to keep it out of the sight of the children,
Remembering you did say you were fond of my hand and
wanted it.

Jill Hoffman

The Three Pigs

When they were big, they knew they must leave the
barnyard
and make their way in the world:
the first little pig took her toothbrush and her mother's
Persian lamb coat that still had her mother's name in
the lining
and her suitcase stashed full of angora sweaters and dark
skirts
and her mother's amethyst beads and some old flannel
nightgowns
and her grandfather's vest, garnet, onyx, and pearl
earrings,
and left. Her mother kissed her on the lips.
There was only one man down south in the small town
she went to
and she lived with him, in a straw house with a muddy
lake.
She woke up to the moon three nights a week and
smocked
in its cold brocade, dressed for a warm January.
In the front yard were birds of paradise looking like
ladies' hats.
They nodded to her from their savage pews.
In bed, the man could only get her attention by slapping
her face.
During a driving lesson,
the last day before the test, his car turned over three
times
and she flew out the broken door on the driver's side
for miles
in her fur coat and one glove, while he stayed safe
inside.

The second little pig pulled on a wolf hat to make her look
like
an Eskimo and a mouton coat to keep the North wind out
which she wore inside her shaky wood house with its
dangling radiators
on the ceiling, and one thundrous with tinfoil over her bed,
its silver skin sighing in the black night of her boyfriend's
snores
till it fell, pinning their absent carcasses to the sheet
and caving in the floor. After that,
she knew there was only one man she could love, her
chastity
filled Ithaca with moths: she moved to a trembling
house on a hill
buttressed by pearl clouds and clanging garbage pails
like knights.
Everyone thought it would blow over, but she made
her low bed,
read books in it, ironed in the kitchen, wrote burning
letters
at the black salvation army desk overlooking the abyss.
And flew back glazed in a frozen plane from a visit
to her first
love who was engaged.

The third packed a wardrobe to sink the S.S. France.
She had a whole trousseau, a dozen black lace bras,
a dozen
beige, full slips, half slips, long corsets, scant garter-
belts, a hand-
pearled wedding gown that she never wore again, and
a husband who had
a green coat made out of suede pigskin. He was a brick.
When she had rolled on the floor with him where he
worked, she had thought,
“I would like to build my house with him.”
The first day in their sturdy house, the new wife
went shopping in Saks Fifth Avenue, for her birthday
was coming up
and she needed a bag. She put her old one on the hook
on the back of the door in the ladies’ room — when a
woman’s hand
reached in:
she emerged, scalded as a wolf from the boiling cauldron.
When she got home with a migraine and locked herself in,
the phone
rang and a woman’s voice said, “This is Saks Fifth
Avenue,” liltingly,
“we found your discarded pocketbook, it is being held
for you in the
Credit Department, if you would care to pick it up.”
Collecting herself, she grabbed her fun fur and jumped
into a cab.
Suspiciously, as if she were not a creditable person,
they stared:
“I know of no pocketbook, Madam.” Holding her head
through a maze of flying straw and twigs, she picked
her way home
where nothing was left in their walled garden
save the pale rind of her husband, his face a dark rose.

Cynthia Genser

Into the Wintering Process

“I said, it’s a long roll from the doldrums
into the wintering process.
From gathering tomatoes
to oranges whose color rubs off,
from skin to wool.
From sleeping in ribcages like a white tooth
and into the drop of dead time.”

Lifting his head from the paper he noticed her orange hair.

“I like the color,” he said at the headlines.
And then he said,
“Let me embrace you tenderly.”

She laid her orange head upon her arms, she said,
“I would, but I’m all wobbly-weary,
my legs, I haven’t got my sea-legs yet.”
She wondered that winter made her so unsure.

After the dishes were done
and the paper put away for the night,
they lay in the dark.
She dreamt of how they drifted into the wintering
process,
and how it was
slightly like dying.
He dreamt of how her hair, over-dyed and slept-in,
got washed away in a wave,
and how she emerged,
her white skull breaking the waters.

Your Last Experiment

You shaved your hair off and waited for
the regeneration of ringlets,
the development of waves,
the slow invisible shaft growing
in the white fallow, the unknown field,
of your skull.

In the drawing room you sat shaven
among cleavages rank with sweat.
You wore a black feather boa, a sequined dress.
Slowly the first grayness hovered, an image
darkening under the light, under the hypo,
above the gray masses of the brain
it sprouted.

You told them you were a scientist, an artist;
that you were sure God heard your prayers.
You told them it felt like sandpaper,
don't touch it, well, all right.
They adjusted the lamp so the light fell
and the ladies passed their hands back and forth,
back and forth,
over the stubble.

At first it formed patterns like seaweed clinging
to a rock.
You wondered when it grew back
if it might turn traitor,
refuse the firm command
of brush and comb.
You whimpered in your sleep.

You wore a white shirt as we sat by the sea.
You picked up a shell bright as a mirror.
“Oh no,” you said, “I’ve missed it,
it’s grown back overnight!”
And you stood twisting a curl under the summer sun,
and your mouth made a little ‘moue’,
your mouth,
as pink
as a pink pebble.

Liquids

Coffee wakes you from that sleep-bruised face,
fraggles your nerves
till they push you out into the day, into the twitch.

Rain and dandruff slush creep through your boots,
feet seep. By noon you're ready
to swallow a Pepsi, it sparkles your throat

and in the new sun your sweat bakes the mud into dust
on your face.

By 5 the excuse to stop: the whistle runs through
your ears
and cuts a string in your head.

You become friends with the guy next to you
and agree to stop for a drink. The beer drags the day's
crust down,
coats a glistening path and

in the corner of your eye, like the last thought before
sleep,
something glints.
It reminds you something you can't remember.

A woman with pale powdered breasts and spots on
her neck
nurses a brandy alexander and you buy her one.
Your friend from work has excused himself

till morning. He's got family, kids,
and each of you would trade places.
He could love the pale powdered darkness

and the chance to get lushed now and then
and you'd drink all those quarts of non-fat milk
just to get close to his wife.

A Story About Friends

Joy Williams

It was the middle of January and there was nothing to look forward to. The radio station went off at dusk and dusk came early in the afternoon and then came the dark and nothing to watch but a bleached out moon lying over fields slick as a frosted cake, and nothing to hear at all.

There was nothing left of Christmas but the cold. The cold slouched and pressed against the people. Their blood was full of it. And their eyes and the food that they ate. The people walked the streets wearing woolen masks as though they were gangsters, or as though they were deformed. Old ladies died of breaks and foolish wounds in houses where no one came, and otters could be seen traveling over frozen pastures, seeking new rivers.

The cold didn't invent anything like the summer has a habit of doing and it didn't disclose anything like the spring. It lay powerfully encamped — waiting, altering one's ambitions, encouraging ends. The cold made for an ache, a restlessness and an irritation, and thinking that fell

in odd and unemployable directions. The pain would start in your lap, boring up and tearing through like a big-beaked bird, traveling up your spine then to the base of your skull, entering your brain like fever. So it was explained.

Judy Jaxe and Julep Lee were the best of friends. Each knew things that the other did not, and each had a different manner of going after the things that they wanted. Each loved the handsome chemistry teacher of the high school. Love had different beginnings but always the same end. Someone was going to get hurt. Julep was too discreet to admit this for she tried not to think of shabby things.

They were fourteen and the only thing that was familiar to them was the town and the way they spent their lives there, which they hated.

They slept a great deal and talked about the same things always and made brownies and popcorn and drank Coca-Cola. Julep always made a great show of drinking Coca-Cola because she claimed that her father had given her twenty-five shares of stock in it the day she was born. Judy would laugh about this whenever she thought to. "And my father drives a *Tom's Nuts* truck," she would say. Which was true and which was the funniest thing Judy had ever heard herself say and which her father deserved because he was such a creep and left them long ago.

Their schoolbooks lay open and unread, littered with particles of bread and nail trimmings. Every night that didn't bring a blizzard, they would spy on the chemistry teacher, for they were fourteen and could only infrequently distinguish what they did from what they merely dreamt about.

The chemistry teacher had enormous trembling eyes like a deer and a name in your mouth sweet as a candy bar. DEBEVOISE. He was tall and languid and unmarried and handsome. He lived alone in a single rented room on the second floor of a large house on the coast. The house was the last one on a street that abruptly became a field of

pinces and stones and dead elms. Every night the girls would come to the field and, crouching in a hollow, watch him through a pair of cheap binoculars. For a month they had been watching him move woodenly around the small room and still they did not know what it was they wanted to happen. The walls of the room were painted white and he sat at a white desk with his white shirt rolled down to his wrists. The only thing that was on the desk was a tiny television set with a screen the size of a book. He watched it and drank from a glass. Sometimes he would run his own hands through his own thick hair.

Judy Jaxe and Julep Lee felt that loving him was a success in itself.

But still they did not know what they waited for in the snow. The rocks dug into their skinny shanks. Their ears went deaf with the cold. At times, Judy thought that she wanted him to bring a woman up there. Or perhaps do something embarrassing or dirty all by himself. But she was not sure about this.

As for Julep, she seldom said things that she had not said once, long before, so there was no way of knowing what she thought.

* * * *

Julep was the thinnest human being in town, all angles and bruises and fierce joinings. Even her lips were hard and spare and bloodless as bone. Her yellow hair, thick and short and badly cut, was faded out, a parched color, the color of hemp. Her brows and lashes were the same, although her eyes, under heavy round lids that worked slowly as a doll's, were brown. Judy said to her often,

"You were badly thought out."

Julep's parents had moved from the south to the north when she was four months old, and she had lived on the same bitter and benumbed coast ever since. She steered her way through each day incredulously, nonetheless, as though she had been kidnapped and sent to some grim prison yard in another world. She couldn't employ the

cold to any advantage so she dreamed of heat, of a sun fierce enough to melt the monstrous town and set her free. She talked about the sun as though it were a personal friend of hers, waiting in the next room for her to get ready and go out with it.

On Julep's brow was always a hint of fever. In Julep's head always waited pictures and lessons, overwhelming in their inapplicability.

NEVER PUT CHEMICALS IN YOUR MOUTH UNLESS
YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO

And Julep was an innocent, a Baptist, a clarinetist in the band, a forward on the six-girl basketball team which was famous throughout the state, undefeated, unthreatened, unsmiling in their hybrid intent. She had scabs upon her knees, a blue silk uniform in her locker, fingernails split and ragged from the gritty ball. Julep had passions but no desires.

* * *

Now, Judy Jaxe too was an innocent, but had a tendency to see things in a greedy, rutting way. Judy was tiny and tough and wore a garter belt. Almost every one of her eyebrows was plucked from her head and her hair was stacked over a foot high, for her older sister was a hair-dresser who taught her half of everything she knew.

Judy was full and sleek and a favorite with the boys and she would tell Julep things that Julep almost died hearing. She would say, "Last night Tommy Saloma exposed himself to my eyes only in the rumpus room of his house," and Julep would almost faint. She would say, "Billy Colter touched my breast in Library," and Julep would gasp and hold her head at an unnaturally high angle for she felt that if she held her head on the slightest cant, everything inside her would stream terribly from her mouth, everything she was made of, falling out of her head and shaking on the floor in front of them, and Julep knew that after that, everything would be changed and everything ruined.

Judy always told her friend the most awful things she

could think of, true or false, and made promises that she would not keep and insulted and disappointed and teased her as much as possible. Julep allowed this and was always deeply affected and bewildered by this, which flattered Judy enormously. This pleasure compensated for the fact that Julep had white hair that Judy would have given anything in the world to have. It annoyed her that her friend had such strange and devastating hair and didn't know how to care for it properly.

After school, they would often go to Julep's house. They usually went there rather than to Judy's because Julep's room was nicer. Judy's room was just a closet with a bright light-bulb and a Hollywood bed and no room for anything else except for Judy's fantasies of being a gun moll holed up after a job.

Julep didn't like to go there because it smelled of underwear.

They went to Julep's room and never said much.

* * * *

"Look now," Judy said, peeling off a strip of scotch tape from her bangs, "why don't you broaden your conversational base? Why don't we talk about men or movies? Or even mixed drinks?"

Julep shrugged, "I don't know anything about those things." In her head suddenly was a picture as though someone had pushed a slide through a slit just above her ear. She was on a southern river, wide and red and sluggish, and there were enormous moss covered trees and stumps and stiff vines. There were animals watching her with eyes big as pies. The top part of them was bright red and the hind part, black silky hair. She had read once in the Bible that the sun would someday become black as a sackcloth of hair and the moon would turn red as blood. This was because of the evil in people, and Julep worried that this would happen to the sun before she had a chance to get to it. The animals didn't tell her anything and she stretched her eyes wider and looked at Judy and then they disap-

peared.

"You don't know anything is all." Judy plucked at her sweater and smiled the bittersweet smile she found so crushing on the lips of the girl models of the fashion magazines. Her new breasts rose and fell eerily beneath a sweater of puce.

"I know that someday you're gonna poke someone's eye out with those things," Julep said. "If I were you, I'd be worried sick."

Judy yawned. Julep stared out the window with her ageless sexless eyes. Judy poked her. The sun was still up but nowhere in sight. The air was blue and the snow falling through it was blue, and the trees were as black as though they had been burned.

"I'm leaving," Judy said abruptly and swept out of Julep's bedroom and downstairs to the kitchen.

Julep rubbed at the frost forming inside the window-pane with a thin grey nail which was bleeding beneath the quick. She felt her head sweating. If she pressed her hands to it, it would pop like a too heavy tick on a dog. If Hell were hot then Heaven must be freezing cold. She backed away from the window and thudded down the stairs.

LET US BUILD AN ELECTROLYTIC CELL AND
GENERATE SOME OXYGEN WITH IT

Judy had drawn on her boots and coat. She waved coyly at Julep.

"Well, aren't we going over there tonight to watch him?" Julep asked nervously. She swung her eyes heavily toward her friend. Looking often cost Julep a great deal of effort as though her eyes were boxes of bricks she had to push around in front of her.

"No," Judy said, for she wanted to punish Julep for her dullness.

Julep moved her mouth back and forth awkwardly. She thought violently and with sudden grief that her life was never going to be used up. It would dangle out of sight somewhere, useless, on a gallows.

"Sorry," Judy said loudly. Her books were lying on the table beside a small dish that said, LET ME HOLD YOUR TEABAG. Judy rolled her eyes and then shook her head at Julep. Julep's father owned a little grocery store. In the window, specked with ancient flies, was a hand-lettered sign.

WHY MAKE THE RICH RICHER
PATRONIZE THE POOR
THANK YOU

"How can you stand to live in such a dump?" she asked. "With such dummies?" Julep didn't know. Judy left and walked through the heavy snow to dumb Julep's father's dumb store where she bought *Glamour* and lifted a mascara and eyeliner set.

Julep ate supper. Chowder, bread, two glasses of milk and three pieces of cake. She felt that she was feeding something inside her that belonged in a pen in the zoo down in Boston. A plow traveled up the street, its blade ringing against the stone of sidewalk curbs, its orange light chopping through the blackness. She went to bed early, for she had tests and a basketball game the next day. She thought of the tropical ocean, of enormous white flowers on yellow stalks motionless in the sun. Things would carry distantly over the water there. Things would start out from ugly places and never reach Julep at all.

* * * *

CHEMISTRY INVOLVES EXPERIMENTATION
AND EXPLANATION

Judy Jaxe and Julep Lee had become friends the summer before when they were on the beach. It was a bitter, shining Maine day and they were alone except for two people drowning just beyond the breaker line. The two girls sat on the beach, eating potato chips, unable to decide if the people were drowning or if they were just having a good time. Even after they disappeared, the girls could not believe they had really done it. They went home and the next day read about it in the newspapers. From that day

on, they spent all their time together, even though they never mentioned the incident again.

* * * *

WHENEVER A SITUATION THAT IS AT EQUILIBRIUM
IS SUBJECTED TO SOME SORT OF STRESS THE
SYSTEM WILL THEN CHANGE IN SUCH A WAY
AS TO RELIEVE THE STRESS

Debevoise was thirty-four. He didn't care for women and he couldn't care for men. He was the only roomer in a shabby but respectable boarding house and took no part in adventure. It was a corner room and had two windows. One overlooked the field and the other the sea. There were no curtains on the windows and he never pulled the shades. He paid \$30 a month and ate breakfast with the elderly owners. Coffee, ice, soda crackers any time. He drank a fifth of bourbon every week, ate lunch every noon at the high-school and drove to a hotel in the next town for dinner every night. He spent the rest of his salary on skiing gear and sports coats. He was stern and deeply tanned and exceptionally good looking. As for the teaching, he barely recognized his students as human beings, considering them all mentally bludgeoned by the unremitting landscape. He couldn't imagine chemistry doing any better or worse by them than anything else.

Debevoise was like an arid pretty canyon with the wind blowing through it.

And the girls felt hopeless, stubborn and distraught, for they had come a long way on just a whisper more than nothing.

* * * *

They could approach the house either by walking up the beach, climbing the metal rungs welded into the rock, which was dangerous and gave them no cover, or they could walk through the little town and across the field. Their post was a small depression beside an enormous pine, the branches of which swept the ground. Further away was a rim of rocks which they had assembled as another hiding

place. Every night they could see everything from either one of these locations.

Every night the chemistry teacher was projected brightly behind the square windowglass and watching him was like watching a museum. It was like condoning the dead. The girls would often close their eyes and even doze off for a time, and the snow would fall on them and freeze in their hair. Sometimes he would take off all his clothes and walk around the room, punching at the wall but never hitting it. Seeing him naked was never as exciting as the girls kept on imagining it would be since no one had ever told them what to feel about this.

Even so, Julep would come back to the house smiling, as though someone had made a very exciting promise to her. No one was there to notice this, for her mother was always locked in her room, powdered and rouged and in a lacy bed-jacket like an invalid, watching TV and eating ice-cream from the store, and her father had been sleeping for hours, twitching and suicidal, dreaming of meat going bad in faulty freezers.

On the nights when the girls saw the chemistry teacher without his clothes, Judy pretended to swoon with delight but actually felt very hostile and dissatisfied. The vision was both improbable and irresistible. His body was brown all over and did not seem real. The boys she knew were so comprehensible. Of Debevoise, she understood nothing. She could pretend he was a movie star, beside her, naked, about to press his tongue against her teeth. Mr. Debevoise was going to put a bruise on her neck! He was going to take her hand and place it on his belt!! But she was not truly interested, and it made her mad.

* * * *

ASK YOUR MOTHER FOR AN OLD METAL SPOON THAT SHE NO LONGER NEEDS

The morning after Judy had refused to go spying, Julep woke with a headache and a terrible thirst. She thought for a moment that she had taken up the watch all by herself

and something awful had happened to her. As soon as she stepped outside, someone was going to tell her about it.

* * * *

MANGANESE DIOXIDE IS A DIRTY BROWN PRECIPITATE

The sky was grey with pieces of black running through it like something that had died during the night. Walking to school, Julep suddenly started to cry. Her throat ached and her head felt heavy. She pulled savagely at her colorless hair, arranging it so that it fell more directly into and around her eyes. She stood in front of the school, her arms dangling, looking at her feet. She looked and looked, shocked. There she began. There were her boots, tall scuffed riding boots, her only winter footwear, which let in the damp, staining her feet each day the color of her socks. Then came her chapped knees, yellow and grey from spills on the gymnasium floor. Then her frayed and ugly coat. Her insides, too, were not what she would wish, for she knew that she was convulsively arranged — a steaming mess of foods and soft scarlet parts, Baptist Bible quotes and queer bumpings and pains as though there was something down in her frantic to get out.

Debevoise, she knew, was pure and warm with not a speck of debris about him.

Julep walked to school and moved down the busy halls like a wraith, meek and bony and awkward, her tow head glowing like a lamp. The classes before Chemistry were endless. The cold seeped past the window sills and over the plastic rosebud on the teachers' desks.

The classroom fell away and she was alone with Debevoise in a rubber raft on a clear green ocean. Small sweet fish nibbled on each other without rancor and parts of them fell off with no blood attached. Julep's knees touched his and they both had cameras and were taking pictures of each other. The sun was burning a hole in the top of her head. . . .

* * * *

No one ever played in the snow or used it for anything. It came too often and it stayed too long. In the cafeteria, the windows were even with the ground and criss-crossed with a steel mesh to protect the glass from objects flying through the air and across the ground. The snow was higher than the windows. Judy sat alone at a long wooden table. Old food and bobby pins were lodged in its cracks. The cafeteria was a terrible place which everyone recklessly frequented. When Judy saw her friend's narrow nervous frame move jerkily across the room she decided on the spot that she would forgive her and they would resume watching Debevoise that very night. Afterwards, they would go to Julep's room and drink gin and Coca-Cola. They would have highballs and she would make Julep talk about men whether she wanted to or not. Julep could provide the Coca-Colas since she was making money on drinking them.

Julep sat down and looked at Judy shyly. The chemistry teacher walked past them and sat at the faculty table on the other side of the room. He wore a lemon colored suit, a dark blue shirt and deep yellow tie and the fixed smirk that was his usual workaday expression.

They watched him respectfully. Julep closed her eyes. It was like wallowing in the sun just looking at him. Judy jabbed her friend's arm. With her eyes shut, Julep looked sick and unconscious, beyond the range of instruction. "What do you really want him to do? What would you have him do if you had your way?" Judy asked impatiently.

"He'd take me away," Julep said. "He'd keep me warm."

Judy scowled. She tapped her fingers on the table and then leaned toward Julep and whispered in her ear.

"The way you're sitting there and the way you're talking, you look for all the world as though you'd just gotten raped."

Julep's eyes fell open, blurred and out of focus for sev-

eral seconds as though they'd been somewhere other than her head for the last few years. "You could ruin the heavenly city itself," she finally said.

* * * *

Judy called her "Heavenly City" for the rest of the afternoon. In chemistry laboratory, she muttered at her until she had ruined her titration experiments. Julep poured the chemicals in the trough of running water that flowed down the center of the slate work table, and pressed her hands to her roaring head. She could feel Debevoise standing silently beside her, smell the cologne and the new shirt. His bright clothing rested on the rim of her eye like a giddy tropical bird.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE IS TO KNOW WHAT
TO EXPECT BEFORE YOU DO ANYTHING
IN THE LABORATORY

After classes, in the gymnasium, Julep sat on a bench behind the scorer in her shining uniform and the high white sneakers that she had won in a state-wide set-shot contest the year before. She could not remember why she had become obsessed with playing basketball. She taped up her wrists.

Judy was a fan in the bleachers, surrounded by boys. The boys were all running combs through their hair and all wore jeans and hunting boots. "Heavenly City!" Judy shouted. "Heavenly City!"

Julep watched the girls from the other team. They caught the basketball delicately as though it were covered with some dreadful slime.

On the court she played extravagantly, her hard white head cresting above the others clutched beneath the board, her bony elbows shocking the girls in the ribs. Her nostrils filled with dust and the tapping heat of the radiators. Julep's team was far ahead. The cords of the net creaked as the ball floated through. Basketball was serious business and Julep felt no levity. Life was what you figured out for yourself.

“Heavenly City, Heavenly City!” Judy persisted from the stands. “Look to your right!” All the boys around her looked soberly down on the court and chewed great wads of gum. “Look to your right,” Judy shrieked, “and get a fright!”

Julep moved her eyes gingerly along the sidelines. The opposing forwards had the ball and were moving it softly around on the other half of the court. She stood panting and slightly bent, looking through the stands until her weary eyes rested on Debevoise. He was smiling kindly and looking at her. His dark handsome face was smooth and empty of habitual boredom and disgust, and his lips, in the instant that she saw him, seemed to be moving toward an expression that she had never seen him have before. It was then that the ball hit her squarely in the head and blinded; she fell to her knees. She heard a noise from the bleachers, something corrosive and impersonal, a rush and a hissing bubble as though her head had opened up and a wave was coming through it. A titter and blurred silence. As someone helped her up and off the court, she could see the chemistry teacher, his head slightly averted, smiling and smiling into his hands as though his jaws would crack.

Julep walked home slowly in a freezing dusk, her coat in her arms. Her brain was pumping madly, although her heart was still. She didn’t know what she thought or how she should now proceed. The afternoon past was concise and attenuated. Hers to keep like a dirty photograph.

Judy came over at nine o’clock, a bottle of gin zipped up in the lining of her coat. She had found it lodged behind the record player in her house. The bottle was very dusty and about two inches of its contents were gone. Judy didn’t know if it was still good or not.

Julep was in the bathroom, pressing a hot washcloth against her left eye. Almost all the white had disappeared into a soak of red. Judy did not speak to her about the embarrassment of the basketball game. She thought Julep was crazy to get so excited about playing a boy’s game and

she was also suspicious that too much of that sort of thing would change her friend's hormones. Magazines told her terrible things and she believed in most of them.

Judy went to the kitchen for glasses and something to mix with the gin. From behind a closed door, she heard a television going and a woman's voice above it. No, the voice said. No, that bum is up to no good. There was a shot, then a bump and rising music. I told you, the voice said. Judy gathered up a handful of stale cookies and went up to Julep. The cookies were in the shape of stars and burnt at the edges.

"Holiday relics," Julep said, mopping at her eye.

"We could make a batch of obscene cookies for Valentine's Day," Judy giggled, pouring the gin.

Julep squinted, not able to imagine what they would be like. She saw herself and Debevoise eating sweets together and her mouth contracted. They linked arms and fed each other cookies, thin as glass, of almond and sugar, in the shape of men and birds. They were very intricate, resembling, somehow, something recognizable.

"I don't know if you could do that around here," she said. "Maybe in a foreign country you could."

They each drank a glass of gin and then walked through the town. The town was all one color with hardly anything moving in it and the night was very cold and clear. Beyond the field, the sea was flat as a highway in the moonlight.

"I feel just beautiful," Judy said in a high wet voice.

Julep said nothing. She felt only hot and ponderous, as she had when she woke up that morning. She arranged her head scarf over her injured eye. Every once in a while, the eye seemed to roll backward and study her instead of bearing outward toward the night.

They settled beneath the giant tree and Judy fumblingly took the binoculars from her coat. She dropped them in the snow and giggled as she dug them out. She thought that Julep was just trying to be smart and had no doubt poured her gin into the rug or something when she wasn't

watching. She pushed against her rudely and raised the binoculars.

"God," she said loudly. "He's nude again."

Julep sat hunched, her arms around her knees. Her clothes were soaked with sweat and rivulets of perspiration ran from the corners of her mouth.

Judy was rocking back and forth beside her. "You'd never know what to do with him if you ever got to him."

"You're yelling," Julep said. "Someone will hear you." She tried to think of her own nakedness and what it might mean to somebody, even herself, but she had never paid any attention to her own body. Her eye shuddered and then became a piece of raw meat lying tamely in her head.

Debevoise was clamping a sunlamp above his bed. He turned it on and then lay on his back with his hands beneath his head. The bulb hung over him blankly for a moment and then lit shrilly. Almost at the same instant, the door of the house opened and a flashlight beam bored over the field. Judy gave a small shriek and pushed herself backward against the tree trunk.

"Who's there!" a man demanded. "I know you're there." Behind the voice was a pink hallway, an old woman standing in a shawl, her hand in a fist moving across her mouth. There seemed deadening light everywhere. The sea and snow and sunlamp and now the old man walking toward them. The girls knelt beneath the tree like jacked deer.

"Don't go over there, Ernest," the old woman said.

The man stopped and moved the light in a wide arc. "It ain't the first time you been here. You come out or there's going to be trouble."

"Ernest," the old woman said fretfully, turning the porch light off and on as though she were guiding in a ship. Judy and Julep bolted, stumbling across the field, spinning off tree limbs, their hands over their faces. "Hey!" they heard behind them. "Hey! You get outta here."

* * * *

WHEN WE WRITE THE EQUATION OF A CHEMICAL
REACTION WE USE AN ARROW TO INDICATE
THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE
REACTION PROCEEDS

Julep was sick for three weeks and never moved from the bed. She could hear children on their horses, cantering in the streets. She could hear the plows. She drank soup and sniffed herself beneath the damp bedclothes. She felt that she was an exceedingly fragile organism lying beneath complex layers of mulch. She also felt that something she could not locate was rotting or even removed. Her face was shrunken and without structure, as though something were burning it up and coring it out from within. The snow fell eternally out of a withered sky and inside, Julep, beyond the range of dream or reasoning, continued to burn.

She couldn't decide if it had been coming for a long time and she had just gotten in the way of it or if it had always been there with her and she had just recognized it.

Ever since the afternoon of the basketball game, she could not remember how she had once regarded Debevoise. He was the pain and the heat of her head, and no longer something she could think about.

Judy also could not bear to think about Debevoise. It frightened her to think they might be caught. Everyone would think she was queer. The girls would laugh and the boys would take advantage of her whereas now they fought over her and loved her and were half scared to death of her. She was glad that Julep was sick and they didn't have to sit around in the snow. She would never admit that she was being cautious or afraid, but she would tell Julep sometime after she got well that she was bored and had learned everything she wanted to know about Debevoise and didn't care to love him anymore.

Judy would come to visit Julep but didn't like to look at her. Once, Judy said, "He asked about you, you know."

Julep smiled politely and studied the hem of her sheet. "He asked if you had moved and I said no, you were

sick and then he said girls keep themselves too skinny these days as a fashion and they don't eat the right foods and get sick."

She had wanted to be cruel but she could never tell anymore if Julep was listening to her or not.

After the fever passed, Julep was remaindered, cold and dry like something tossed up from water to a seaside shelf. She returned to school and everything was tiny, as in a dream, and moving with blinding speed. She could not keep up with it all, her muscles, resting for so long, were useless for anything. In the laboratory, she spilled potassium permanganate, staining her skirt and hands a deep brown. The marks could be removed only by wear. She watched her hands accompany her now like a dark disease, like a man's hands, soaked and sordid.

BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL WITH YOUR SOURCES OF HEAT

She was cold, she was cold.

* * * *

Julep went out now alone to watch Debevoise. Judy was surprised and she became defensive and intrigued, imagining that Julep was at last succeeding in something they had not been able to accomplish together.

"I can't imagine anything going on that we haven't already seen," she said peevishly. "The only thing that could happen is if one of us got up there in that room right with him and we were looking out of that window instead of looking into it. You're going to get sick out there and freeze and go unconscious and they're going to find you out there."

Julep looked at her wrecked hands and rubbed at them briefly with a piece of flannel she had started to carry around with her.

Judy was suspicious. She worried that something interesting had happened. "You've got to have somebody caring for you all the time," she said. "I'm going to go with you one more time but then I'm never going again and I'm

going to stop you from going out too.” How she would do this last thing, she didn’t know. She could tell on Julep, she supposed. That would stop it all dead. She looked on Julep righteously and Julep looked back.

The night was black, moonless and starless, with only the snow shining dully with its own light, and the ice hanging in webs from the trees. They walked with their hands strung out in front of their faces and their elbows sticking out, shuffling a little so they wouldn’t trip.

The ground was ice-buckled and sunk. Judy’s knees dipped and she bit her tongue, her jaw joggling as though it had come unhinged. She had fallen out of practice, out of step with the land and her reason for being on it. Julep walked steadily ahead and Judy followed, somewhere in a movie war, a lusted after orphan, in full bloom and in danger all the time. If only Julep had imagination, she thought, she wouldn’t get so involved in things.

They settled down beside the tree, in a new and deeper ditch, with a stone base and the sides smooth ice, alarmingly, impossibly, like a home.

The second floor was in darkness.

“He’s not even here,” Judy said accusingly.

Julep’s face stuck out of her wool wrappings, grainy, white as sugar. “He’s here,” she said.

“Well, what’s he doing in the dark!” Judy shouted. “Have you been watching him do something in the dark?” She was getting angry. They crouched in a cloud of her perfume. She suddenly knew she hated the scent and she waved her arms around her head, striking Julep. She felt like throttling Julep who was tilted slightly toward her, in a trance and satisfied, dumb and patient. She looked toward the house, feeling Debevoise moving thunderously in the dark and making no sense to her. She was getting so angry she thought she would bust. She gave a little squeal and stamped her feet, then stood up and started to make her way back across the field. She was moving fast, kicking her feet out in front of her, moving so fast that she

thought when she felt her boots sliding away that she could still catch up with them before she fell, but her legs kept moving forward while the rest of her slid back at a dizzying speed and she tipped over with a crack.

She lay there whimpering. Unlike Julep, she had never hurt herself in her life. She had never been bruised or sick or burnt and nothing had ever broken. She remained on her back, prodding herself gently, singing to herself in a little girl's voice. She was suddenly pulled roughly to her feet and shaken hard. Debevoise had grabbed her by the coat front and was pushing her back and forth, pinching her breasts, pushing and pulling at her as though to a music beat, his face riding from side to side only inches in front of her, as though it was his head that was wagging and not her own. His face was raging. It seemed on the verge of flying apart. He was saying several simple words to her but she could not seem to understand them. He would propel her back as he said each word and then yank her toward him in the silence between the words and it was as though someone was turning a radio on and off.

Then she simply stopped rocking and with his hands still on her coat, he toppled toward her, turning her slightly to the left as he fell so that they both sank side by side in the snow. His head settled and then broke slowly through a crust of ice. One eye filled up with snow while the other continued to stare at her.

Julep, a rock in each hand, took several steps forward and knelt beside him. There were two wounds in the back of his well-shaped head. She raised her hands again, dropping them with a slow, hard force against his skull. They made almost no sound. The eye that was still staring at Judy seemed to shake. His mouth was closed tightly but there was blood coming from between his lips, dropping on his collar. Judy backed away. His hands remained on her coat but then dropped off and she crawled away to a tree, wrapping her arms around it and groaning like a leashed dog.

Julep had lost her mittens. The backs of her hands were cold from the snow but the mottled palms were hot from the man's head. Pieces of his hair came off on her fingers. Her brain felt simple at last and was wide as the sky. There was nothing working its way through it anymore to damage and confuse her. All the lessons had been learned and were gone. She was white and glistening, turned inside out, scrubbed down and aired. She lay down and tucked herself beside him, running her hands over the thin shirt he wore, feeling his collar bone, his ribs, the hot muscles of his stomach. She unbuttoned his shirt and pressed her lips against his left nipple. It was hard, withered, much like her own. His neck and chest were damp and salty to her mouth as though he had been swimming or crying. She browsed around his chest and tasted the salt. She lay her colorless famished head upon his shoulder and felt herself slipping into, lapping up, swallowing the sun.

David Ignatow

The Driver

I paused in my car at a street corner before entering a broad, busy road, looked in both directions for traffic and then eased into the road ahead of distant, oncoming cars, a warm feeling of accomplishment that once more I had entered the stream of things to become part of America, on the go. When I reached my house and entered I slid back into a chair and felt stranded, forgotten and apart in my own home.

The Interview

Dear fellow gull, a question or two for you to answer, if you care to. You're up there banking and floating in the wind. Is that for pleasure in it or do you have something else in mind, such as spotting clams from that height? Secondly, as you walk along the shore, is that just for the pleasure of walking or are you feeling with your feet for something to eat? The last question, what kind of soap do you use? We are advertising Cleano. Have you used it yet? Oh you have and you say it tastes good. That's great. May we quote you? Thank you. There will be residuals from this. That means we'll be able to pay you for your endorsement of our product each time it flashes on the screen. We can send it to you in cash or in clams. You prefer clams? That'll be easy enough. We'll hire your fellow gulls to dig them out for you and provide them by the bushel. Oh you don't want that. You've changed your mind. You want my bald head on which to drop your clams from a height. I can send you as many bald heads as you wish but you must excuse me if I withhold mine. You see, I'm program director and without me we can't get you on the screen with your commercial. You want me to resign and come live with you? I might try it some day but you must excuse me now, I must take your answers to the studio. You'd like to open my head like a clam and drop it from a height? (One hundred gulls are observed taking a good grip on the program director with their beaks and lifting him to the sky and releasing him in the air! He's still dropping. They catch him as he's about to land, fly him up into the air again and release him, this time they mean to watch him land.)

I'm a Depressed Poem

You are reading me now and thanks. I know I feel a bit better and if you will stay with me a little longer, perhaps take me home with you and introduce me to your friends, I could be delighted and change my tone. I lie in a desk drawer, hardly ever getting out to see the light and be held. It makes me feel so futile for having given birth to myself in anticipation. I miss a social life. I know I made myself for that. It was the start of me. I'm grateful that you let me talk as much as this. You probably understand, from experience; gone through something like it yourself which may be why you hold me this long. I've made you thoughtful and sad and now there are two of us. I think it's fun.

Brian Swann

Watch

A watch. An old one used to hanging from the black silver satin pocket of a grandfather, swinging when he walked; or plumb in the black silver waistcoat pocket of a grandfather, sliding with dignity, infinitesimally, imperceptibly, from side to side in the dark as he rolled slightly in his old walk.

But the back is buckled.

I push the buckled edge down, trying to even it up, make it flush; but the other edge pops up. I continue this for some time, finally trying to put equal pressure on both edges. When it suddenly occurs to me that I haven't heard it ticking. To make sure it's working, and worth all this trouble, (maybe it's old and dead, the buckling a sign it's succumbed to the pressures of time, foreign forces thought tamed twisting it awry from its perfection).

I put a thumbnail under the tipped edge and pry it open like an oyster. Inside all is calm. The wheels are whirring silently, with jerky elasticity. It is an image of quiet efficiency with none of the bounce of youth, or rather, with a bounce unobtrusive and with the grace of a perfect result from the most economical movement.

The back remained open, buckled.

Cameo

The cameo has moveable parts on its face. They all enact the same story. The cameo is heavy. It is not something to wear on a dress. It is more at home where you would put a clock; on a mantel-piece, for example, with a log fire somewhere below casting on the dramatic mechanism a domestic pathos. When looked at properly, the parts act thus:

He and she are walking along the top of a cliff. You can sense the springy chalk-turf and a large expanse of downs open to the left. The horizon seems never to end. The two walk side by side, silent, not touching. She steps to the right, over the edge of the cliff. He grabs her arm, but her impetus carries them over and down, to alight on a green shelf only about two feet below the cliff-top, which she, walking closer to the edge, had seen; but he not. He had almost twisted her arm out of its socket trying to save her. She is moaning and waving the strangled limb, screaming and accusing him. He has bent his head on his arms. He too is in tears.

The mechanism needs no tending. It is self-winding. Set in a silver frame, the cameo can be carried from room to room. But it prefers the living-room, a fire, laughter and good company gently swaying the damask curtains. The children marvel at it and the adults are proud of it.

A Miser

A man was able to get hold of all the laughter in the world, and he packed it tightly and locked it up in his house, and hid the key.

The trouble was that nobody missed it.

He had to tell them what they were missing. Nobody knew what he was talking about. Nobody believed him. Nobody thought that what he was talking about was real. Who could believe that, after all? Would anyone believe it if someone came up to him and told him that they had all the laughter in the world locked up somewhere? Would anyone believe it, even if neither of them laughed?

He tried to describe laughter to them. He showed them how it was done. He showed different ways in which different people could laugh. He told them all the things that made people do it, everything he could remember or invent. People falling down. Filth. People making terrible mistakes. People unable to control themselves. Misfortunes of all kinds. People with something the matter with them. No interest.

He told them that it would be good for their health and that he would not make it expensive for them. No interest.

There were many things about it that he didn't even know, he said. No interest.

It had been called divine, he said. No interest.

But the man kept on trying. Because at least at night he could always go home and take out the key and open up some and have a good laugh to himself. But then one night he started to laugh at himself and that made him lonely.

He tried to invite somebody else in to laugh. But it was very hard. He even said he would give the laughter away.

At that somebody laughed.

So that person remembered how to laugh. So that person was on his side. They were laughing together. Somebody else was laughing with him.

But that meant that somebody else had some of the laughter in the world. So he started making plans to steal it.

But the other person kept giving it away.

An Adventure in the Tropics

Edmundo Desnoes

I met the Russian group again at the home — no, he is already dead — at Hemingway's Museum. Always the same thing. We hadn't been there even five minutes when a penetrating stench of life also entered and began to gesticulate: "Comrade, please. There, one minute, please, a photograph." I looked at him, half attracted, half repelled; he was blond, with an enormous round face with his small black camera dangling over a checked shirt. He moved his hands persistently towards Elena, as if stopping something, demanding of her the same immobility as of hunting trophies hung on living room walls. Smiling, I pointed out to her a spot under the antelope's head with glassy eyes and crooked horns. While Elena calmly placed one leg in front of the other and stretched her hand over the back of the upholstered armchair with a hunting-scene fabric, two men and a woman, three other rancid and penetrating stenches, stood behind the photographer, who changed position several times with the camera in front of his face.

Always the same thing. The same old tourists. The great

power visits one of its colonies; the emissaries. It's hell. They are somewhat more humble, it's true, and without any physical properties in Cuba, but their attitude is the same. Besides, what they don't take from us in dollars they obtain in propaganda. And the saddest part would be to realize that they are right, that this is the way that life is. An attitude similar to Hemingway's. That's the only thing that backward countries are good for, a life of pleasure: to kill wild animals, to fish, or to lie in the sand to get some sun. To enjoy life. All the Russians were sun tanned, bronzed. To them, Elena was *una bella senõrita cubana*.

"That pose is already very old fashioned," I told her in order to play her game, "spread your legs arrogantly as if you were a boy and stretch your arms as if you were about to escape from the hunter." "Shut up," she said to me, smiling. The bitch was enjoying her part of an exotic and underdeveloped animal. The fixed antelope, Elena motionless; and then she smiled again. The Soviets, as the Russians are now called here, smiled courteously, naively, with smiles that showed gold teeth. "Thank you, comrade, thank you very much. Beautiful, very beautiful, thank you."

"This one is called a giraffe-deer, an antelope much in demand in Africa for the beauty of its elegant and twisted horns — the mulatto guide was explaining with religious monotony. "The long neck is one of its beauty traits. Hemingway was very fond of this animal, it's a difficult animal to find; when Hemingway first saw it, he hesitated before shooting, he didn't dare to shoot at it because of the effect that its extraordinary elegance and beauty had on him. It was one of his favorite trophies."

I walked away so I wouldn't hear such a repulsive litany. Perhaps Hemingway drank to forget that he had killed those helpless animals, I thought, when I saw the table with several empty bottles of whiskey, Spanish wine and cognac, although he used to say that he killed to keep from killing himself. He is also dead now. We looked out

the open window between the antelope's head and the poster announcing the bull fight. The four Russians passed by the window, and the group stationed itself under the ceiba tree. The thick trunk was almost as solid as the barrel-shaped bodies, one beside the other; the woman, with her hands over her wild-flowered skirt; the men, with their arms crossed over their shirts — either green and blue checked or yellow nylon, dirty and transparent. How they looked like the Americans! They can't wait to be the future Americans, they admire Hemingway more than they admire Fidel. I bet anything they admire Hemingway more than Fidel. "They are ugly," Elena says. "Even so they will be the masters of the world." "I don't care" — and Elena begins to sing *sombras nada más, entre tu amor y mi amor*. . . "Let's go, let's go see the rest of the house."

When we entered the small living room, Elena took off her shoes to walk on the lion's skin which was spread on the floor. I immediately thought of the women who had visited Hemingway in that same house: Ava Gardner, Ingrid Bergman, Marlene Dietrich. They probably also took off their shoes to feel the dead lion's skin under their feet. I was hurt when I realized that Elena was not sharing what I was thinking. She put on her shoes, made a rough half circle in the air with her forefinger, and she hit her thigh with the palm of her hand: "So this is where that Mister Way used to live? I don't see anything out of this world in this house; truly, just books and dead animals. Big shit. It looks like the Americans' house at the Preston sugar mill."

It was true, it looked like the house of a sugar mill manager, this is exactly how they lived. It had not occurred to me before and Elena discovered it. If Elena wanted it, she could develop her mind. . . . She has a natural intelligence. That thought was just a subtle idea. Yes, it was the typical furniture of a middle-class American family from the Middle West, with its upholstered armchairs, with English hunting scenes, the small table with drinks, the

magazine rack, even the corny bull-fighter posters. "The same furniture and the same American smell." I asked her how the Americans did smell and she answered me: "Oh honey, I don't know. They smell of nylon, of tooth paste, of raspberry jelly, of lipstick, of deodorant and things like that. The Americans have a peculiar smell and the Russians stink."

The trouble is that she doesn't worry. She never gives much thought to anything. When she says things like that, they come out spontaneously. I thought that she had spent all of her life in Havana. I didn't know that she had been in Oriente, that she knew the big American sugar mills. She had never told me anything. "I can't even remember now. The big scene that my cousin and I had. It was really something." I had to insist, she didn't want to talk. "I don't know, the door was open. A door just like that one over there, with a screen, we were bringing the American lady clean clothes, the door was open, and I don't know how it came to happen but we entered a room where the American lady was lying in bed half naked, cutting her nails, with her face white, full of cream. . . . She insulted us." I insisted again. "I don't know, I didn't understand anything, she began to shout at us in English. . . . I wouldn't look at her face, I was left paralyzed, I would only look at the black lace panties that she was wearing. Like the ones you gave me from your wife. Don't remind me of that. I didn't do anything. I don't want to talk anymore." I asked her how old she was then. "Ten or twelve, I don't even know, it doesn't matter. My father was without work, going through real hard times, he had been fired from the bus company, and they sent me with my aunt. My aunt was a laundress. I don't want to talk about it. I can't stand it. That's why I don't like to remember, I prefer to invent things. . . ."

Hemingway's room really impressed me. Something and everything in it showed a great lack of appreciation for life. People waste, squander, and are generous when they

have an abundance of things. Everything was thrown, scattered in a conscious disorder; the house had been left intact as it was in Hemingway's life. Everything was stiff. One could see it rigid. But the furniture was sloppily arranged; all kinds of mementoes thrown over a table: a Nazi swastika, snatched during the Second World War from the enemy, from one of its victims, probably a rotten cadaver; an oval photograph from when he was young; some old glasses with a delicate iron frame; fish hooks disguised as insects; coins from other countries; papers full of notes; a ridiculous golden "sputnik." Everything thus. What really impressed me was the austere and monastic air of the room, of his room. The guitar player of Juan Gris was missing from behind the bed, and there was a rectangle of lighter color, cleaner, in the place where the oil painting hung during so many years. I smiled, I was an intruder there, a tomb violator, I had read all of that in an article, in a book, as I had read that his Smith-Corona was his only psychiatrist. I was recalling things with each step. I had seen him photographed in *Life*: Hemingway in shorts, sitting on the bed, the cold Juan Gris, behind him, and everything surrounded by elastic cats.

"Hey, why is it here?" Elena cried out, stopping next to the typewriter which was on top of an enormous dictionary in a book shelf. "Where did you want him to put it?" I angrily said to her. "On the table, there. Yours is always next to the table." "Hemingway wrote standing," was all I was able to tell her, being disturbed and ashamed. "Why don't you also write standing?" "I don't know, I think he had hemorrhoids." Had I read it or did I invent it?

We were silent for a while and Elena began to touch, one by one, softly, all the typewriter keys. Then the guide entered, I thought that he would severely scold Elena, but no, he began to talk with a soft voice, full of respect, eloquence, and submission: "Every morning Hemingway would get up very early and would start writing right there, where you are standing, Miss, without a shirt and

without shoes, he liked to feel the cold, Spanish tiled floor under his feet or that soft kudu skin." "And where did you come from?"—Elena asked him frowning, her nostrils trembling. "I didn't see you when you came in." The mulatto, with his round face even rounder, appeared to be ashamed and proud. "Did I frighten you? Forgive me if I frightened you. I was with the Soviets until now. Didn't you see me? I came in through the door. I walk very silently, as a panther, Hemingway used to say. You know something, when he would write, I was the only person that could enter the room, he would be right there. He would let me come in because I didn't make any noise when I entered, I would use these same tennis shoes. . . ."

He was leaning with his legs against the bed, all dressed in white, his starched pants whiter than the sheets. I remembered then that his name was René Alcázar—no, Villarreal—and Hemingway had found him playing in the streets of San Francisco de Paula. I also read that somewhere.

One could see that Hemingway molded him to his liking, the faithful servant dog of the great lord. The colonizer and Gungha Din. Hemingway, I bet anything, must have been an insufferable fellow.

"He would work until eleven, more or less, then he would go swimming in the pool. He always liked to take a dip after work and before lunch. Here, in this book shelf, are the different editions of his books in all the languages of the world. Look, come closer, this one is the Russian edition; when Mr. Mikoyan was here, he brought these books and this small *souvenir*: a 'sputnik'. Hemingway's works have been translated into all languages, even into Japanese. This is an edition of *Farewell to Arms* in Japanese. . . ."

I also noticed that he had the complete works of Mark Twain and that he had written in *The Green Hills of Africa* that all American literature had come out of *Huckleberry Finn*, specially the first one hundred pages, which I had

read with stupid care; Elena was pacing the room, not interested at all in what Villarreal was saying, much less in Mark Twain or the translation of *Farewell to Arms*.

"What shoes!" Elena cried out with an enormous loafer in her hands. "His size was eleven and a half," the guide said right away. It seemed as if I saw Hemingway for the first time in my life, alive, walking in those shoes, inside of the well-worn, dull, brown, dirty loafers. I had never seen him in person, and now I was seeing him for the first time, enormous and solid, athletic and dead. "His size was eleven and a half," Villarreal repeated, passing his finger tips over the dusty leather, leaving clean lines in the shoe.

"Americans have very big feet. That is the only thing I don't like of the American woman. I have always noticed it, even in the most beautiful," I said to change the subject, and Elena commented: "It looks good in a man," and she returned the shoe to the floor. "I have a nice foot, don't I?" "Your toes look like big-headed midgets," I lied, and Elena entered the bathroom grumbling. "How funny! Look, look, he read even in the bathroom," and she pointed to a small book case next to the white porcelain toilet seat.

"Yes, Hemingway had that custom. Every day he would read for a while in the bathroom. . . . That? That's a lizard. One of the cats found it in the yard and took it by the neck and sank its teeth into it and shook it in the air. Hemingway saw it and tried to save it. The lizard tried to defend itself with its tail, it was brave, but couldn't make it. Hemingway rescued it and tried to save its life because it had put up a good fight, but couldn't do it. Right here in this bathroom, he placed it and took care of it, cured its wounds and brought it food but no luck. It died in a week. Hemingway picked it up and placed it in a jar with alcohol."

Already I was getting a little fed up with the guide's idolatry, with his always very human and revealing anecdotes. He sat on the toilet and shitted like everyone else,

and it seems with difficulty. "Houdini," I said getting hold of a book, "look, he has a book about Houdini here." "Houdini was the one who swallowed and vomited swords and files. . . ." "Hemingway used to read a lot, about everything, specially magazines and newspapers. He would read every magazine that he received from the United States. . . . Every day he would weigh himself and would write down his weight in the door frame. He wrote very small numbers, he had a beautiful handwriting. He always tried to keep his weight at around two hundred pounds, he would take very good care of his health. He used to say that in order to write you had to be healthy, that any sickness, any physical malaise, interferes with work. He always watched his weight."

We returned to the living room that had the lion's skin on the floor and we saw a Russian, smiling, with his shoe in the lion's mouth, between the dead and yellow fangs. The guide took out a bunch of photographs from a drawer and placed them on top of the table next to the sofa. "They are from the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway was in the Spanish Civil War. These are from Robert Capa." A choir-like group pressed itself around the table. I looked for Hemingway's corpulence in the photographs, but I couldn't find it in any, I didn't see him. His wife must have taken them. Uneven uniforms, berets, dust, and machine guns that now looked like toys, and long rifles, and a man running in a field with a bloody face, falling, dying, letting his black rifle loose with his arms extended, the white, wide, wrinkled trousers shining and the indifferent grass, with ammunition or leather bags and belts on the waist or grenades, as if they were seeds to scatter in the field, a peasant who dies while spreading seeds, an Asturian dynamiter.

Elena left the table right away either because she didn't understand death or because she didn't know what had happened in Spain during the Civil War or simply because the Russians without deodorant stank too much. When we

got to the living room, I found her in front of the magazine rack glancing through an old *Harper's Bazaar*. I looked over her shoulder and I saw Suzy Parker, long and slender, in a green bikini, lying in the sand, her red hair loose, her lips half open and a wave reaching her ribs. Elena turned her head slightly to contemplate a blue slip and she saw me: "Look, if I had a slip like this one, so beautiful, I would go out in the street without a dress on. It's more beautiful than the dresses that are sold here by the millions." I ran my thumb hard down her spine and she straightened; she smiled and kept on glancing through the fashion magazine.

The dining room table was set (but nobody was to eat there). On the glass surface there were plates, forks, glasses, and a centerpiece full of insignificant white and purple flowers. "This is the way that the table was always set," the guide said. No one could shut him up now. I noticed, meanwhile, a coarse linen napkin with an enormous letter H. "Exactly so every day." "But now no one is going to eat here," I told him, but he kept on talking, he was like a puppet. "He would have two fried eggs for breakfast, well done, because he didn't like runny egg whites. He liked them well done with one piece of toast without butter. He would sit in front of Miró's picture, the picture of a Catalan farm, a picture that Hemingway bought for three hundred dollars when he was a young man in Paris. He bought it on credit and now it's worth more than one hundred thousand dollars." I asked him where the picture was, as there was nothing on the wall. "That picture and others Miss Mary took with her; after Papa died she came back and took them with her, but she promised Fidel to send him exact copies so that everything will be as it was when Papa lived. She promised to send exact copies, of the same size, to place them there."

"But it's not the same thing"—I said half embarrassed—"reproductions aren't worth anything and the pictures are worth millions of dollars. It's not the same

thing." I don't know if he heard me, but he didn't answer me. "The bullfight posters are originals, aren't they?" I shouted at him and he answered me still half absent-mindedly: "Yes, those are the same." Those were original copies. That's all we deserve, copies. We are but bad imitations of civilized and powerful countries, a caricature, a cheap reproduction.

We went through the house again and I had the sensation that everything was varnished. I looked at everything as one who sees the jewels in a museum from behind a glass and knows that a woman will never again wear them. I have mixed emotions. I feel love and hatred for Hemingway; I admire him and at the same time he humiliates me. As my people do; it's the same thing I feel when I think of Fidel and the Revolution. I am permanently mixed up; I can't even agree with myself.

"This is the tower that Miss Mary ordered constructed," the guide was telling me while we climbed a spiral staircase, rusty, passing by some purple and yellow bougainvillea branches, until my eyes saw the high crest of a royal palm tree. Petrified wood spears, long African spears, greased boots covered by a film of fat, wild animals' heads thrown over the brown rhombus-and-green-branch tile floor design. Everything on the floor. "He worked here only the first day, when Miss Mary gave him the key, it was a birthday present. He never worked here afterwards; he didn't like it. He always worked downstairs, in his room. . . ."

While he was explaining all that household crap, I was left looking at a piece of bald, mangy skin on the lion's head, and I thought that Papa Hemingway didn't give a shit about Cuba. Boots to hunt in Africa, American furniture, Spanish photos, magazines and books in English, posters of bulls. In the whole house, there was nothing Cuban, not even a Voodoo object or a picture. Nothing. Cuba, for Hemingway, was a place to take refuge, to live in peace with his wife, to receive visits from his friends, to

write in English, to fish in the Gulf Current.

Between the arches made by the palm leaves, far away, blurry, white, yellow, one could see some houses and buildings which surrounded Havana's Harbor and several chimneys, every other one, throwing a dirty smoke that kept on blurring the far away houses, the whole view.

When we went down to see the waterless swimming pool, I was completely dazed; nevertheless, I kept on listening to the guide because he was talking with a sweet monotonous voice: "Here is where all the animals are buried," and he bent his head; the trees that surrounded the swimming pool gave shadows to small graves of rough cement. "Here is where Black Dog is buried, his favorite dog; it would always follow Papa everywhere, it would keep him company while he wrote, lying on the floor, when he drank in the afternoons, with its head on his shoes, right here, in the swimming pool, in the shade, while he swam; Black Dog didn't like to swim in the pool."

Elena approached, running. I was looking at her all the time now, and she stopped in the shade, with two enormous yellow spots that filtered between the branches, one on the left cheek and the other one on a breast. "And what's that?" "That's Black Dog's grave." "Who is Black Dog?" "A dog." She moved away, walking under the sun, distractedly, around the pool. I saw when she stumbled upon the two Soviets and the three said: "Pardon, comrade; oh, pardon me; pardon, comrade." "Black Dog was killed by the soldiers. . . . No, before the Revolution; Batista's soldiers came around here one night looking for some boys, some revolutionaries, looking for arms, and Black Dog barked and barked, and didn't let them in and they killed him with a rifle-butt blow. From that day on, Hemingway began to feel uncomfortable in this house and here in Cuba. He needed peace to write."

You have also been killed, Papa, no more servants and Americans here—and us too. We are all going through hell!

"Help. . .elp. . .elp!" Elena was shouting from the bot-

tom of the swimming pool. "Help. . .elp; get me out of here. . .of here!" I don't know how she fell into the pool, how she went down. From the edge, I was looking at her standing below, on the sloping bottom of the pool, in the deepest part. I hadn't seen her go down, I was perplexed. "But what's wrong with you? What are you doing there?" "Nothing. . .ing, I can't get out. . .out." "Have you hurt yourself?" "I don't know. . .no. Get me out of here. . .here, let's go. . .go, hurry, don't stay. . .stay, there. . .there, I'm going to cry. . .cry."

I don't want to see her again. I'm falling in love with Elena and I don't want to. The same thing that happened to me with Laura will occur. I am in love, my finger tips are becoming too sensitive, I feel like shouting. I remember in detail everything we do together. Elena is becoming an obsession, and it can't be. Every time that Elena appeared here, in these pages, talking about the visit to Hemingway's Museum, I would become excited, she makes me feel erotic; I now feel soft inside whenever I write *Elena*, and I remember her. I am not myself, and I'm going to get hurt. Even the style of this diary has changed; I notice it: outwardly, toward the world, toward people. Inwardly, I am more sure of myself. It's a temptation I have to repel. I have to break this relationship. I'm very old, and she is but a child. She only wants to get material things of me, to have a good time. She will deceive me like Laura. She lives in a world completely different from mine. She doesn't see the real me.

Translated from the Spanish by Eduardo Zayas Bazán

Jack Anderson

This Is a Poem for Patrick Casey

Patrick Casey is sitting on the beach.
Patrick Casey is surrounded by sunshine.
Patrick Casey has a sunny disposition.
Patrick Casey is saying "Ouch!"
There is too much sunshine on this beach.
It is pinching Patrick Casey.

Patrick Casey wraps himself up in an Indian blanket.
Patrick Casey has a very pale face,
Except where the sunburn has burned him beet-red.
Patrick Casey is contemplating a musical comedy about
the romance of Emily Dickinson and Henry David
Thoreau.
It will be pornographic.
Patrick Casey waves his paw at children like a friendly
gopher.
Patrick Casey inhabits a pair of dark glasses.
They are prescription glasses, so you can't accuse him
of affectation.
Patrick Casey knows all the angles.
Good old Patrick Casey!

I think Patrick Casey must be Irish.
Patrick Casey argues in bars.
Patrick Casey has had a classical education.
He knows all there is to know about Horace and Terence
and Virgil and Homer.
(None of these people have last names.)
Good old Terence! Good old Horace!
(I wouldn't mind naming my son Terence,
But who would want to name his son Horace?)
He is sitting on his blanket eating crackerjack
and ginger ale.
Not Horace but Patrick, Patrick Casey.
That's what I like about Patrick Casey.

Dear Patrick Casey: Hi there, Pat!
Patrick and Casey are only two of his names.
Patrick Casey has names he hides from the public.
Whatever became of Patrick Casey?
I have never known anyone named Patrick Casey.
This is a poem for Patrick Casey.

Girl on a Roof

She'd gotten into the habit of going nights
to a secret ledge on the apartment house roof
on which she'd crawl until she was almost
over, out in the air above the city, the city

no longer itself,
its schoolyard blotted by the dark, but its bars,
drug stores, groceries, and luncheonettes
swirling with the melted ice creams
and spilled perfumes of colored lights,
the studded belts of avenues, the curves
of street lamps in the park the pearls
worn by a dusky sleeping princess, and the noise —
comets
of horns and sirens, stray voices on corners thumped
into comic strips of rabbits fleeing wolves
with paws stuck luckily fast in pitch and howling,
yowling,
yodeling at her (but harmless) from some radio
or TV — oh,
the noise would weave a net to bounce against: no wonder
she'd lean from the edge and leap, yes, leap
straight into it, falling
through a bubble bath of air, her dress
blossoming around her while she hummed like the wind
with neon alphabets and traffic racing
from red to green past towers of ice cubes
where men and women sat frozen inside
like Mama and Daddy
who never saw her go by,
everything flew past
and she could just
look, look, look, and look

falling toward shimmer, except the shimmer firmed
and dirtied as she neared,
the news stand squatted
and was a hunk of news stand, a hunk, the sidewalk
kept sticking out its tongue,
and they were ready to call the ambulance now,
they wanted her,
they needed her to finish this,
then she knew

she had to return — that, otherwise,
the facts below would try to claim her
while only falling, doing nothing, made her happy,
so she'd let herself be pulled back to the roof
by force of will on the cables of her hair,
and she'd creep down the fire escape and sneak through
a window
and find a Mama and Daddy as usual, saying,
“Where were you? Out?”
and she said, “Yes,
out,” and locked herself in her room, as usual,
and what she did there
no one knew,
she was so quiet and so neat.

Les Sylphides

Tonight there is a performance of *Les Sylphides*. But the ballet is not to be in the opera house, it is scheduled for somewhere in Central Park. At the entrance to the park, each of us is given a bicycle and told, "Now you must find *Les Sylphides* for yourself." So we all pedal off in every direction.

It is a warm spring evening. There is a full moon in the sky. The paths are lighted with electric moons. There are leaves on the trees, and on the benches sit kids, bums, retired stockbrokers, and middle-aged matrons with sore feet and shopping bags. We circle the lagoon, coast down the roadways, or jounce over boulders and into the bushes. But still we find no *Les Sylphides* in the park.

As we cross the Sheep Meadow like a flock of sheep, we ring our bells and call to each other. "Hoo-hoo," we call, "have you found *Les Sylphides*?"

"Hoo-hoo," go the echoes, "We've found no *Sylphides*."

Then someone — or, maybe, someone else — calls back, "I think they are dancing around Cleopatra's Needle. . . I think they are dancing in the Bethesda Fountain. . . I think they are dancing in the Children's Zoo. . . I know they are dancing *Les Sylphides* in the Ramble." We set out to look.

Nothing but water is dancing in the fountain. The baby animals in the zoo are huddled asleep. Only the wind goes round Cleopatra's Needle. And when we zoom through the Ramble, the flustered lovers pull up their pants in a rush and get caught in the zippers.

An hour or so later, we see something vague at the top of a tree. It never grows clear and is, hence, indefinable. Only its effects can be described: it rustles the branches and keeps on blurring, as though about to melt into air. Yet, possessing the inertia of generalized things, it doesn't melt completely, but stays as it is: indistinct, unformed, about to melt, and mushy. While we watch, a voice is whispering in our thoughts, "You are on the edge of finding *Les Sylphides*." Since it is not our voice, we assume it is genuine.

We burst into applause and kiss each other juicily. Once more we pedal off on our bikes, tossing bouquets of flowers on every side. The baskets on our handlebars fill up with the bouquets that everyone else is tossing to us. We are happy that we almost have found *Les Sylphides*. We are so happy that we ride around in circles — no hands — tossing flowers to each other and humming soft songs.

Then we stop for a picnic of cold chicken and white wine. Someone has brought potato salad and someone else has brought cole slaw. When we have eaten the chicken and finished the wine, it is time to go home.

Provoking

I know what I do / I
do it

knowing what I am: man
no doubt about it

I don
a woman's panties, bra, slip,
nylons, skirt, blouse,
earrings, wig, and high-heeled shoes,
I smear my lips with lipstick, my cheeks with rouge

and flaunt myself in public
where every step
thrills with danger, courts

outrage / few men
are man enough to overlook: this
choice of dress / this dress
shocks more than stripping bare:

my wiggle through the streets, my
arbitrary glitter
so teases passers-by
they sweat, moan
no longer self-possessed: yes,
cops even

run riot in their uniforms
to get at me and shape me up
until they have me the way they want me,

so alluring
they find me.

A View of the Homestead

Christina Stead

All night the sleeper sleeps close to a board, irons rattle, a violin played aft vibrates along the side, the body of the ship rises and falls, the engines beat on through seven hundred sleeps. The first day, yellow cliffs, blue coasts, next day, the steep green island south; a new world. Homeward bound on that ship in 1928, a Lithuanian woman in grey knitted skullcap, fifty-five, short, sour, salty; a tall English woman, eighty-four in black, small hat and scarf, who stands for hours by the lounge wall waiting for the Great Bear to rise; a missionary woman, thirty-nine invalided home, worn by tropical disease, her soft dark skin like old chamois; she is going back to the town, street, church she left eighteen years before, because of a painful love-affair with the pastor: his wife now dead, he has just married a girl from the choir, "Just as I was then," she says. There's an Australian girl, lively, thin, black hair flying, doing tricks with a glass of water, by the big hold aft, and around her her new nation, Sicilians, her husband one—they are

playing the fiddle. There's a redgold girlish mother from the Northern Rivers, scurrying, chattering, collecting cronies. Three times she booked for England, twice cancelled; the third time, her youngest daughter brought her to the boat in Sydney. Three unmarried daughters, "Oh, but we are not like other families; we cannot bear to part." Before Hobart, she telegraphs that she will land at Melbourne, go home by train; but they telegraph, "Go on, Mother, please." "They don't say how they are!" She is faded, sleepless, "What are they doing now?" At Melbourne, the women dissuade her and she goes on. Across the surly Bight they make her laugh at herself; she laughs and turns away, aggrieved. As we approach Fremantle, she is dreadfully disturbed; the ship may dock in the night and leave before morning. She sends a message to the Captain. At Fremantle, she telegraphs, disembarks, her rose color all back. "I'm going home! They'll be getting ready! Oh, what a party we'll have!" "What about the presents?" "I'll give them back; I did before."

There's a country minister and his wife, two dusty black bundles who conduct services in the cabin before a number of meek coloured bundles in Sunday hats. The couple gain in stature the farther they travel, until in the Red Sea, having lost all provincial glumness, the minister shoulder-ing tall against the railing, arm and finger stretched, explains the texts, the riddle of the Pyramids, the meaning of Revelations.

For years, I thought hazily about returning; and like that, it would be, in just such a varied society, myself unhampered, landing unknown, "Poor amongst the poor" (a line of Kate Brown's I always liked) and would see for myself. After I had looked round lower Sydney where I walked every morning and evening of my highschool, college and work life, I would go out and stand in front of Lydham Hill, the old sandstone cottage on a ridge which, from a distance looks east over Botany Bay, straight between Cape Banks and Cape Solander, to the Pacific; and

the other way, due west, over a grass patch and the yellow road to Stoney Creek, to the Blue Mountains. That is how it was when my cousin and I lived there with other little ones and played in the long grass and under the old pines.

I knew all that was gone; they had driven surveyors' pegs into the gardens, the neglected orchard, before we left for Watsons Bay; and a friend in the Mitchell Library archives some years ago sent me coloured slides of the house that is. But still I would go and look at the homestead.

The other place—"Watsons"? By a magic that I came by by accident, I was able to transport Watsons noiselessly and as if it were an emulsion or a streak of mist to the Chesapeake; and truly, the other place is not there for me anymore; the magician must believe in himself. And then for long years I had a nightmare, that I was back at Watsons, without a penny saved for my trip abroad, my heart like a stone. It was otherwise. I came by air, the sailor dropped by a roc, Ulysses home without all that reconnoitering of coats, a temporary citizen of a flying village with fiery windows, creaking crashing across the star-splattered dark; and looking down on the horizontal rainbows which lie at dawn around Athens, around Darwin.

Unlike the ship, though close-packed as a crate of eggs, we travel with people we may hear but never see. There is only one street in the flying village and in it you mainly see children conducted up and down. Beside me, is a Greek-born mother with her Australian-born son, aged seven, she talking across the alley in English to her Greek-born neighbours, about the good life in Australia, the peace, the prospects, the education. What you hear in her tones is the good news, the rich boast delivered somewhere outside Athens to the grandparents; it is a wonderful country, we are lucky to be there, no social struggle, plenty of work, success ahead, money everywhere, no coloured people. (It turns out she thinks this.) Standing now in the alley stretching, a tall Italian proud that he has been in the country forty-two years (a year longer than my

absence). There are fourteen children of all ages, three high-stomached young women hurrying out to give birth in the lucky place. Few get much sleep but all are good-tempered, it does not matter; their urge and hope is on, on. "Are you an Australian?" "Yes." I am looked at with consideration.

We are a day late, mysteriously stalled at Bangkok: and the talk is of husbands, friends waiting. It is a neighbourly climate—our friendships are nearly three days old; but there is no time for histories and secrets to come out. They will be met soon, go off by plane, train and car, I will never know them.

As for me, high up, almost lunar, I could not take my eyes from the distant earth, every spine and wrinkle visible in the dry air. There did not seem to be a cloud between Darwin and Sydney. Our firebird lazily paddled (so it seemed against the motionless rush of greater vessels up there) under the broad overhang and what a sight all night! the downpour of stars into the gulf that is not a gulf. In Australia I never lived in suburban or city streets, but with wide waters and skies and this life expanded was coming home to me; you are nearer there (in Australia) to the planets. Even more now—when we have all got a bit of the astronaut in us.

At earliest dawn, the scored and plaited land, water-rivers like trickles of mercury, sand-rivers, the olive furred hide of the red eucalypt land sprawling.

Before that, at Darwin, an airfield in reconstruction. After turnstiles and a forbidding yellow plank staircase, at the top we find a large lounge and in the centre, a small trellissed horseshoe bar, a Chinese gentleman presiding. What good sense, the Australians, what humanity! It is 3:15 a.m. and we are exhausted.

It was there, over the walls, through partitions, in the women's rooms, that there came in high, tired, bang-slapping voices, "Isn't it good to be home?" "Yes, what a relief!" "Better than Europe!" "Oh, yes, I had enough

Europe.” And carolling the gladness like magpies singing with parrots, strangers behind doors, “Yes, it is good to be home.” (One comes out.) “How long were you in Europe?” “Three weeks—three long weeks. And you?” “Two months.” “How did you stand it?” (Forty years of Europe! —I left quietly.)

Novalis said, my friend Dorothy Green remarks, that you must know many lands to be at home on earth; perhaps it is that you must be at home on earth to know many lands. A child in Australia, in the home of an active naturalist who loved the country and knew scientists, nature-lovers, all kinds of keen stirring men and women who found their home on earth, I hearing of them, felt at home; this was my first, strongest feeling in babyhood. I have had many homes, am easily at home, requiring very little. My first novel (before *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*) was to be called *The Young Man Will Go Far* and then, *The Wraith and the Wanderer*, two different novels. (I Still have part MSS.) The Wanderer, once he has started out in company of the Wraith, the tramp and his whisperer, does not look over his shoulder. He does not think of where to live, somewhere, anywhere; anything may happen, awkward and shameful things do happen; he does not believe it when life is good; by thirty all is not done, neither the shames nor the lucky strikes. He takes no notice, it is his equal but different fate, he marries a stranger, loves an outlaw, neighbours with many, speaks with tongues. So that if he should cross the high bridge of air sometimes, going homewards, he is also on the outward path.

Now I am back in shadowy England whose pale streams are sometimes “gilded by heavenly alchemy”, they speak of “hot summers” but there is not the pour of gold nor the fire from the open hearth. Here are white cliffs and mornings, white horses on the downs, topheavy summer trees, King Arthur in his mound, gods and Herne the Hunter in woods, green folk, little folk, squirrel-faced elves; and stranger creatures still, Langland, Wyatt, Chaucer, Ford

and their pursuit of comets, the English splendour; and all this is in the people, their unconscious thoughts and their language.

Under the soft spotted skies of the countries round the North Sea I had forgotten the Australian splendour, the marvellous light; the "other country" which I always had in me, to which I wrote letters and meant one day to return, it had softened, even the hills' outlines in bushfire (which we used to see over Clovelly from Watsons Bay) were paler. The most exquisite thing in my recent life was a giant eucalypt on the North Shore as we turned downhill, the downward leaves so clear, the bark rags, so precise, the patched trunk, so bright. "Look at that tree!" It was outlined in light. It was scarcely spring, but the lawn outside the house was crowded with camellias, magnolias in bloom, even falling; at both dusks the kookaburras thrilling high in the trees, the magpies—I had quite forgotten those musicians and their audacity—and there was even a scarey fiendish cry in the bush early; it came nearer, but remained distant. It was just a bantam cockerel—I had one myself years ago in Santa Fe and had forgotten the little dawn-demon with his one-string violin. Too long in London! Everything was like ringing and bright fire and all sharpness. I was at dinner the other night, when someone said, "What was Australia like?" "It's the wonderful light, Bill," I said to the Texan next to me. "Yes," affirmed he; and the Indian lady murmured, "Yes." Three exiles. No more was said; and the others, Londoners, did not even know what we had understood. It is at least the light. When people ask, I feel like saying, "It's a brilliant country; they're a brilliant people, just at the beginning of the leaps." I think this is true, but it may be in part the light, the broad skies, the crowded stars, that red hide stretched out so far to cover so much land; and I do not say, because I don't really understand it, "And there is the melancholy." I knew as a girl that looking backward was not joy; I thought it was the waterlessness, the twenty year

droughts, the people died of thirst, again the hatred of England, of the hulks, our black legend. But is it like the uneasiness and loneliness felt by Russians, U.S. Americans, Brazilians, who with, at their backs, the spaces and untamed land, seek Paris, the Riviera and New York?

This brilliance one feels is not related to the present sunnyside air common to countries having a stock exchange and business boom and with money flowing (and out of) the country; at best, an uncritical supping of splurge and at lowest, baldly expressed, "It doesn't matter who makes us rich, as long as we get rich." There are people in Australia who no longer believe in poverty. It has happened elsewhere; and been followed by—but we know that.

I was not long enough there to have an opinion about many things. I know about Canberra, beautiful, desolate, inspiring Erewhom, where one can feel "I have awakened into the future of the world"; freer because it is unfinished and all its components not yet joined; and apart, more appealing in its upland, than Washington, D.C. in its swamp; younger, closer at the twenty-first century. I don't understand the settled sadness of some intellectuals, artists and academics. The heat mystery, black shadows in the tropics, the long bright road ending in a mirage? Deserts? Not belonging to ourselves? Not united with our nearest neighbours? Smalltowners in the U.S.A. leave farm for town, town for Chicago and New York, the capitals for Paris and London. Perhaps it is just *The Beckoning Fair One* singing her faint irresistible "very oald tune" (Oliver Onions). Well, let us be discontented then; it has never hurt art.

A Portfolio

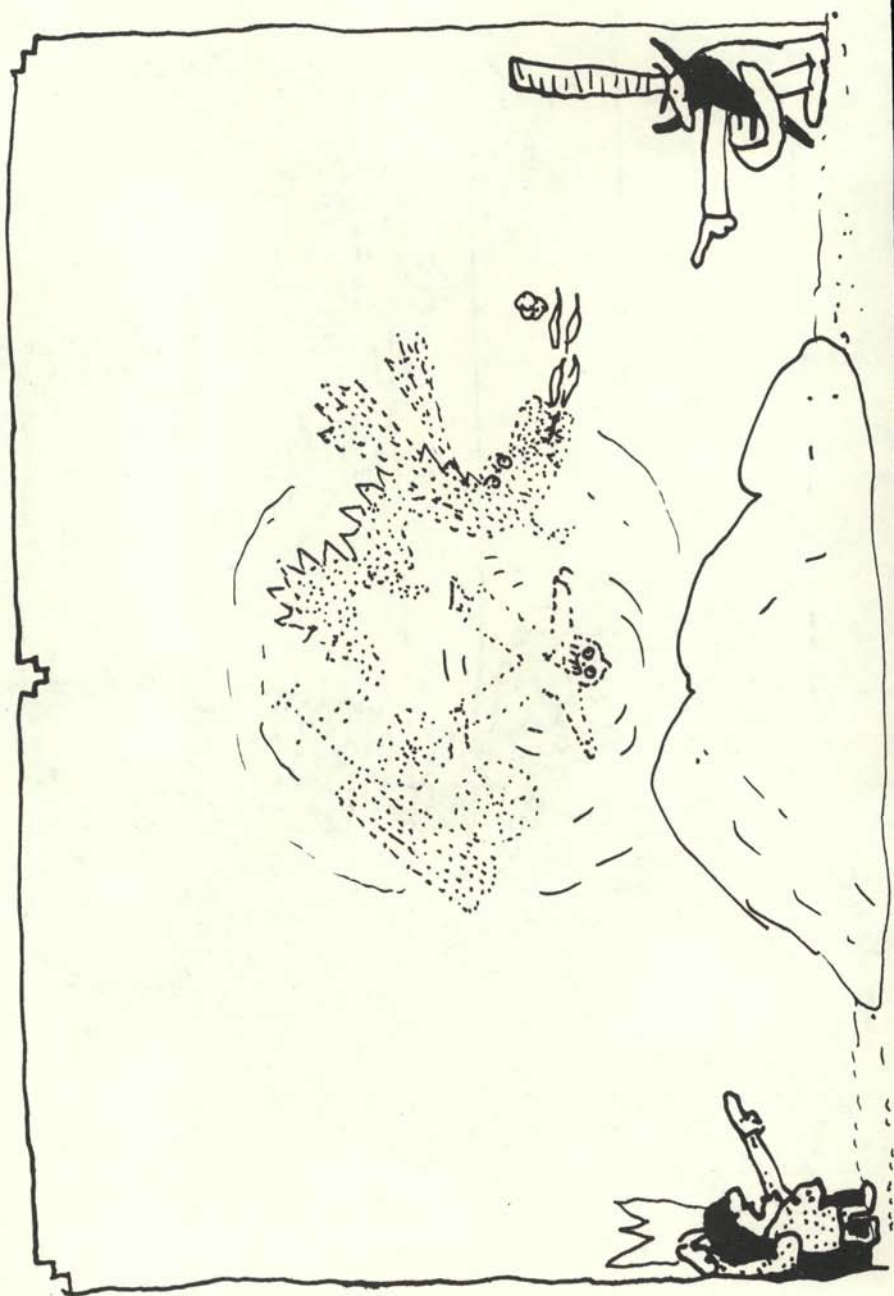
Red Grooms

"Intruder in the hothouse" of defined artistic movements, head clown of the Ruckus World, Red Grooms was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1937. He studied in Provincetown, Massachusetts, with Hans Hofmann who is reputed to have called him "that cartoonist." He was involved very early in the creation of "happenings." But then everything he does seems to take on the improvisational, zany qualities that happenings are remembered for. One notable event in his cheerful and outrageous career was the evanescent appearance in February, 1971, of the now famous "Discount Store" on Madison Avenue and 73rd Street in an unused storefront. An entire three-dimensional scenario of frazzled customers, cash registers, canned goods, papier-mache racks of shoes crammed the space to intrigue all comers. Inspired film-animator, sculptor in every medium from cloth to decoupage, movie star (for his rendition of a monster in Rudy Burkhardt's opus, "Lurk"), and painter, Grooms never stops making things.

These black and white ink drawings are small, but should not be thought of as asides to the large-scale sculptures and sets and paintings he is best known for. They are part of a series of illustrations for limericks. Words are unnecessary. In seemingly crude strokes, the drawings capture characters with affection for absurdities, faces, encounters, exaggerations of detail, The cartoon convention is ingenuously adapted to express sophisticated fantasies and social commentary. Grooms specializes in raw humor, discarding the traditional seriousness which is too often thought a requirement for serious art.

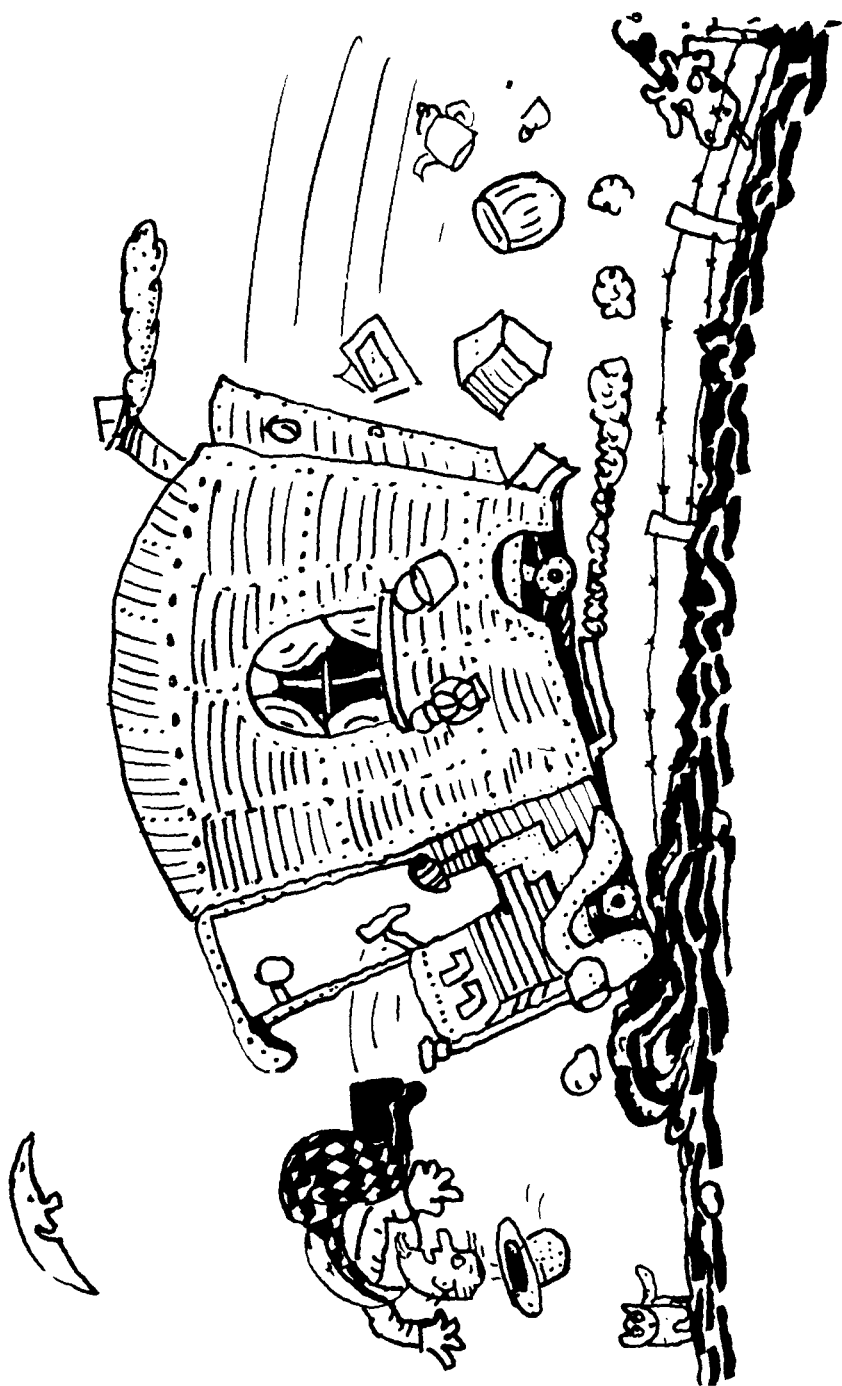












In my ~~last~~ ^{still-} letter I think I mentioned the ~~persist~~
~~persisting~~ ^{lingering} in ~~fluence~~, here, ~~it~~ ^{of} the ~~British~~ ^{Ray}? You
 feel its ghost ^{an} rather wistfully ~~hunting~~ the present,
 now powerless ^{regarding the scene} to exert any direct authority and ~~look-~~
~~ing down~~ with the reproachful air of a ~~dismissed~~ ^{an unwanted} ad-
 viser. The ~~arch~~ ^{charming} ~~itecture~~ of the older buildings is
 full of funny ^{Victorian} evocations of ~~nineteenth century~~ Eng-
 land. For instance, there's a gate ^{way} which leads into the
 grounds of the Monastery, it's ~~only a couple of hundred~~
~~yards~~ ^{just} down the lane from our guest-house. Now ^{The moment} ~~when I~~
~~first~~ ^I set eyes on this gateway I felt a sort of confused
 recognition, ~~and after looking it over~~ ^{and after looking it over} ~~NO AFTER EXAMINING IT~~ carefully a couple of
 times I suddenly realized what it reminded me of --- one
 of the back gates of ^{our} ~~my~~ college at Cambridge, over which
 I sometimes had to climb, when I returned from trips to
~~town~~ ^{London}, after hours! This gateway was ~~most~~ probably built

Christopher Isherwood manuscript page

The Art of Fiction XLIX

Christopher Isherwood



Don Bachardy

Christopher Isherwood's home is in "the canyon" on the edge of Santa Monica, California—a quiet bohemian district of stucco houses inhabited mostly by people involved in the arts. It preserves much of the character it must have had thirty years ago when it first became a haven for refugees from the vast sprawl of Los Angeles. But Demon Change is just around the corner. Santa Mon-

ica is being Miamified. Pallid apartment blocks with factitious names (Highland Glen, Sunset Towers) are rising all around, and the coastline is dominated by fat piles of concrete.

Still, the developers have not yet hit the Canyon (though they are widening the road amid clouds of dust above Isherwood's house), and you can see the ocean in the distance, a silvery blue, dotted with wet-suited surfers riding the swell like seals. The house is built into the steep side of the canyon, and you must slither down a driveway, past a garage containing two Volkswagens, side by side, to the door. Isherwood himself opens, and leads the visitor into the living room. He is dressed with great neatness: navy-blue jacket, open shirt, grey, well pressed pants. He is neatly constructed, too: short, spry ("like a jockey," said Virginia Woolf), with a lean, suntanned face. His most striking features are the bony, Celtic-looking nose and the pellucid blue eyes, which focus on you in oddly hypnotic fashion, as if observing neither dress, nor mannerisms, but Something Deeper. We agree to drink tea. "Do look around," he says, "while I make it."

*The living room is high, white, a bit ascetic, but cool despite the hot July afternoon. Nearly all the paintings are modern, including several graphics of the kind that show cubes and cones suspended in space. There are many books, little furniture and no clutter. A terrace has been added ("We eat breakfast here usually"), and vines cover it. The little houses descend below and climb the far side of the valley. This is the neighbourhood lovingly described in *A Single Man*, by general agreement the finest of Isherwood's ten novels. There is even a gay bar which fits exactly a favourite haunt of that book's protagonist, "down on the corner of the ocean highway, across from the beach, its round green porthole lights shining to welcome you." But it is called "The Friend Ship," not "The Starboard Side."*

Isherwood looks almost startled when you ask why he

lives in California: "Why, it's my home. I've spent almost half my life here." Originally, he was drawn by the presence of Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard, with whom he wanted to discuss pacifism and the impending war. There were trips to New York, lectures at universities, a journey across country by bus, and during the war, after he had registered as a conscientious objector, a spell in Philadelphia working for a Quaker refugee hostel: "But apart from that I suppose I don't know this country awfully well. I've been an American citizen for—what, nearly 30 years; yet I still seem very British, even to myself. I've lived in eleven places in America, and all of them are within sight of this window."

Isherwood is now 69, although he scarcely seems it. His career as a novelist began in 1928 with the publication of All the Conspirators, and over four decades his literary appeal has remained remarkably constant. His most famous book, Goodbye to Berlin, has enjoyed recently a third life as the movie Cabaret (its second was the play I Am A Camera). Now the "religious comedy" which he and Don Bachardy—the artist with whom he has lived for almost 20 years—have extracted from A Meeting by the River has been staged in New York and at Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum. It was a great success.

In recent years, in common with many other writers and artists, Isherwood has become outspoken about the problems and advantages of being homosexual. He has discussed the subject in print and on television (the Cavett show). He says, "For me as a writer, it's never been a question of 'homosexuality,' but of otherness, of seeing things from an oblique angle. If homosexuality were the norm, it wouldn't be of interest to me as a writer."

Isherwood works every morning and then usually walks to the ocean to swim. The substance of this interview was therefore recorded in a series of late afternoon sessions—tea-time. Possibly the conversation reflects something of the hour.

INTERVIEWER

You don't mind if I record this? I have a terrible memory.

ISHERWOOD

Of course not. So do I.

INTERVIEWER

I wanted to ask first how you came to write *A Meeting by the River*. It seems so different from your earlier novels.

ISHERWOOD

You know of course that I've been involved with a Hindu monk, Swami Prabhavananda, for almost the entire length of my life in America—more than 30 years now. A few years ago, there was a centenary of the birth of Vivekananda, who is the chief disciple of Ramakrishna and a great inspirer of Gandhi—he had all kinds of ideas about the future of India. So there was a great national celebration, especially in Bengal, that year, and they decided to have one of those congresses that they so dearly love with speakers from foreign lands; and Swami said would I come along. So I did. At the same time, two monks from the Vedanta monastery here were coming out to India to take their final vows, sannyas, and I was in close contact with their feelings and the whole predicament of being about to take sannyas. For a long time I'd wanted to write a confrontation story, where the representative of something meets the representative of something else, and quite suddenly it came to me that this was the way to do it. I talked a great deal with the monks afterwards while I was writing it and checked up immensely on the details. I had been to the monastery once before with Don [Bachardy] in 1957, but that was only briefly. . . . It was infinitely more comfortable than the hotel in Calcutta! Perfectly clean with

nice simple little rooms, and a place where you washed down with a bucket of water.

INTERVIEWER

Has your involvement with Vedanta changed your life?

ISHERWOOD

It's made a very great difference, but I couldn't exactly describe to you what the difference is. I could say what, so to speak, I've got out of it. I simply became convinced, after a long period of knowing Swami Prabhavananda, that there is such a thing as mystic union, or the knowledge—we get into terrible semantics here—that there is such a thing as mystical experience. That was what seemed to me extraordinary—the thing I had completely dismissed.

INTERVIEWER

There's a passage in one of your books in which you and Auden are on a train, and you're savagely attacking religion and he says: "Be careful my dear, if you carry on like that, one day you'll have such a conversion." Do you think of it in those terms, as a conversion?

ISHERWOOD

Yes. I rather think so. I went through all sorts of attitudes to it. There was a period when I thought I might become a monk myself.

INTERVIEWER

What would that have meant, in practice?

ISHERWOOD

It would have meant living at the Vedanta centre in Los Angeles; I'd probably have spent a great deal of my time helping to translate Hindu classics and increasing my knowledge about Vedanta philosophy; and perhaps giving lectures when I got to be a Swami, which I should have

been by this time if I'd stayed with it—it's about 12 years before you take the final vows. Not long after I met Swami Prabhavananda, the war began and I went to work with the Quakers at a hostel for refugees in Philadelphia, and after 1940 and Pearl Harbor, I volunteered to join a Quaker ambulance corps going to China; but they only wanted qualified doctors or automobile mechanics—it was essential to be able to repair the ambulance. Then I would have registered as a conscientious objector and gone to a forestry camp for firefighting—like the one in *Paul*—but suddenly in the midst of the war they lowered the age limit, and I wasn't liable for service. I was completely at a loose end, I'd untied all ties; and then Prabhavananda said, "Why don't you come up to the centre and help me translate the Gita," which we did. There was a general feeling that I might become a monk, but then I decided, rightly or wrongly, that I didn't have a vocation. But I've always remained in touch with Swami Prabhavananda, in fact I see him every week.

INTERVIEWER

I've never been quite sure what people mean when they talk of a vocation.

ISHERWOOD

Well, would you say there is such a thing as having a literary vocation? Let me put it like this: you know the sort of person who goes around thinking 'I Wish I Were A Writer,' and perhaps he does write a bit; and in the end his friends say, well, the trouble was he had no talent. Really, talent is vocation: there is such a thing as having a natural aptitude for a way of life; not everybody can become a monk.

INTERVIEWER

It's the overwhelming desire to do that thing, then.

ISHERWOOD

Yes, the desire to do that, rather than anything else. In the end it would have meant giving up a whole area of my writing.

INTERVIEWER

And you would have to be celibate.

ISHERWOOD

Yes, they make a great point out of that.

INTERVIEWER

All religions do, don't they?

ISHERWOOD

One has to look at it from two angles, to hear the Hindus explain it. One is that by being celibate, you store up energy; and since there is only one life force, one kind of energy, that is what you are using, in one way or another. Even that Hindu attitude was a tremendous revelation to me. I'd been brought up in this puritanical way to think of flesh and spirit, the low and the high, the forces of lust and the forces of. . . something else. But they think it is the same thing on different levels: the Hindus have this image of what they call a serpent power, that rises through different centres—like an elevator that calls at the lust department on the bottom floor and rises to other levels. That's one aspect of it—really little more than athletes are told: to lay off while they're in training. From the other side there is the aspect of being devoted to this search, of avoiding human entanglements and devoting oneself to the love of God. And yet of course the Hindus are the first to agree that all love is related, and that one can go a very long way through genuine devotion to another human being. One always talks as if loving someone was simple and easy, but in fact it can be very hard work.

INTERVIEWER

The play of *A Meeting by the River* had a big success here in Los Angeles.

ISHERWOOD

I'm awfully glad. One of the most gratifying of all expressions on one's friends' faces is when they are genuinely surprised that you had it in you. It *is* far more realised than the book: it plays out the undecided duel between the two brothers more intensely, and so the nature of the comedy comes out more clearly.

INTERVIEWER

What made you choose that book to dramatise? You once described *A Meeting* as "rather a secret little book"; and the letter form seems prohibitive.

ISHERWOOD

Well, I would never have thought we could dramatise it. It was largely James Bridges, who's an old friend, who insisted that we could. Then we asked ourselves: *is* it possible? Then it became a challenge; and then we saw that the very fact that the characters were all elsewhere—except for the two principals—imposed a technique which was fun: the people are there, and yet they're not there, just as they are in life.

INTERVIEWER

My one reservation about *A Meeting by the River* was that it seemed rather withdrawn about the ecstatic side of religious experience—a bit veiled: there were no Dostoevskian agonies and ecstasies. Do you think religious experience of this kind can be transmitted in writing?

ISHERWOOD

I think it's awfully difficult to do, but possible: Dostoevsky does it better than almost anybody. One day

somebody gave Prabhavananda *The Brothers Karamazov*. Now, although he has read all kinds of books, he certainly doesn't restrict himself, he had read no novels. And he said, "But this is absolutely marvellous!" He was astounded, he adored the character of Father Zossima. He really thought that all novels must be like this. I'm afraid he was badly let down. But I think the experience of many people who take to contemplative religion is that when you first stir the thing up you get extraordinary moments of joy, a sense of excitement which tends later to disappear and only come back when you're much further on. There's no question that Prabhavananda has such moments, and then he's quite something. In *A Meeting by the River*, though, Oliver is rather dour: his temperament is such that it's rather difficult for him to feel that kind of joy. He has something of that kind of experience when he sits on the stone bench in the monastery and he feels that Swami has been sitting beside him. This is one thing we rewrote in the play and tried to bring out more strongly, making it more like a series of ejaculations: "Yes! Yes, I saw him! He was actually *there*!" —that kind of thing. It's written now in a way that makes it easier for the actor to project that kind of ecstatic joy. It's really a terrific sense of relief: that after all the whole thing is true! You've been telling yourself that it is, but you didn't absolutely believe it, and it's only after you've had such an experience that you realise it really is: there's always a further dimension of belief which you don't think you have reached. I agree that it's rather missing from the book; I hope it isn't from the play.

INTERVIEWER

Perhaps it's a western Christian attitude to expect these agonies: I guess what I'm saying is that the Hindu religion may be more joyous. I missed the suffering.

ISHERWOOD

No, the Hindus are not so impressed by suffering: they

don't think it's something marvellous in quite the same way. It's true that Ramakrishna said that people shed buckets of tears over their families and their bank accounts, but they won't shed one tear for God. . . .The Bengalis anyway are so absolutely non-Nordic, very lively and bright and mercurial and if they weep it's not for long; much more like the Italians.

INTERVIEWER

Edward Upward once said that you became a pacifist after your journey to the war in China: was that in fact a turning point for you?

ISHERWOOD

Well, I've always hated explanations that sound so rational. I'm quite sure that I've had a strong leaning towards pacifism throughout my life. But it was very convenient to say that, and it's not exactly a lie. It did bring things home to see what people look like after they've been killed in an air raid, to see the effects of gas gangrene on boy soldiers, to see millions of innocent civilians dragged into a war they neither wanted nor understood.

INTERVIEWER

Here's a quotation that interested me from *Down There On A Visit*. The narrator is going through a crisis of sorts about his pacifism at the start of World War II, and he says: "Suppose I have in my power an army of five million men. I can destroy it instantly by pressing an electric button. The five millionth man is Waldemar. Will I press that button? No, of course not, even if the four million, nine hundred and ninety nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine others are world-destroying fiends." Is this your basic, personal reason for being a pacifist?

ISHERWOOD

Oh yes—because once you have refused to press the but-

ton on account of Waldemar, you can never press it. Because Waldemar might be absolutely anybody! And since then, I've had occasion to say this, tentatively-thinking it might be regarded as a self-regarding, capricious argument—but to my surprise people said that it had convinced them more than some high-sounding reasons for being a pacifist. They thought it sensible. But really I was just trying to describe what, when you're driven into a corner, makes you react that way.

INTERVIEWER

What does Vedanta teach?

ISHERWOOD

It's quite ambivalent on the subject. The Hindus believe in one's dharma, one's duty, one's nature; they say the great need is to discover one's dharma, which of course is an intense mystery nowadays; in classical India you had your caste; your caste had its own duties. If you belonged to the second caste, the warriors, you either fought or became a monk. . . . rather like the middle ages.

INTERVIEWER

I suppose the Christian position in justifying war is that the wicked simply profit from meekness and go on to worse evil.

ISHERWOOD

But then that's a political argument, really. It's not an argument that cuts any ice in reference to what we're talking about. . . . Above all, and this is really what made the greatest impression on me when I was young, I got into my head how loathsome older people were when they preached war, when they were well past the age when they could be sent out to die. And I always said to myself, I won't be like that when I get old. And yet you know, one of the best and noblest men I've known, Bertie Russell, got into

exactly that situation. We talked about it, and he was marvellous—he said how it embarrassed him, but yet that he did believe this war—the Second World War—was different. As you know, he fearlessly opposed World War I. I said, Well, I didn't think you could only oppose some wars. Just as later I've sometimes got into arguments with people who specifically resist just Vietnam, for instance. Except that on a political level one's absolutely entitled to do that.

INTERVIEWER

Do you follow a routine when you're writing a novel? A certain number of hours a day, that sort of thing?

ISHERWOOD

I don't have any special routine. The great thing is to get after it every day, and that to my mind applies to everything one does, even the tiniest act of the will towards a thing is better than not doing it at all.

INTERVIEWER

Do you type?

ISHERWOOD

Yes. For many years I've written on a typewriter.

INTERVIEWER

How long does it take you to write a book?

ISHERWOOD

Hard to say. Eighteen months, two years for *A Single Man*. I wrote three drafts in that time. When I was young I used to proceed like a rock-climber: I had to get to a certain point, and then I considered that everything below me was conquered. But now I don't do that at all. I go through the first time in a very slapdash way, and if I get into some nonsense or digressions, I write it through to the

end and come out on the other side. I'm not at all perfectionist at first. I do all the polishing in the last draft. When I was young I was absolutely fanatical. I wrote in longhand and I couldn't bear for there to be any erasures on the paper, and since this was before all these wonderful breakthroughs with Liquid Paper, etc., I used to scratch words out with a razor and then polish the paper with my thumbnail and write it in again. It was terrible! I wasted so much energy fussing!

INTERVIEWER

Have your books been widely translated? What countries like them?

ISHERWOOD

Everything has been done in French and Italian; a certain amount in German, Swedish, Danish, Dutch. One little thing, a story called *The Nowaks* in Russian. A couple of Czech and Spanish translations. But I don't think they're really popular in translations. It may be a question of nuance. The French really liked the books; they've been more sympathetic than anybody. The Germans, who you might think would be interested, were not all that much. The Berlin Stories, to some extent; the play of *I Am A Camera* was performed in Germany. There are things that are very difficult to translate: half-puns and concealed quotations and little things like that.

INTERVIEWER

Is there any particular aspect of your work that you dislike?

ISHERWOOD

Well, my attitude's rather like Pontius Pilate: What I have written I have written, you know; and I can't imagine—as some writers have—going through a book and producing a rewritten version. There are some gross mistakes

which I should change if I could ever remember to. Wrong words in German. . . silly things like that.

INTERVIEWER

Do you rewrite much?

ISHERWOOD

Yes, a great deal. What I tend to do is not so much pick at a thing but sit down and rewrite it completely. Both for *A Single Man* and *A Meeting by the River* I wrote three entire drafts. After making notes on one draft I'd sit down and rewrite it again from the beginning. I've found that's much better than patching and amputating things. One has to rethink the thing completely.

INTERVIEWER

I noticed a remarkable number of changes in the version of *Mr. Lancaster* that originally appeared in the *London Magazine*, and the final version of the book.

ISHERWOOD

You're really a student! But you're quite right. I just changed my whole attitude in certain parts of that.

INTERVIEWER

Do you work fast?

ISHERWOOD

I don't know, it seems to take me quite a time to finish a book. . . . They say D. H. Lawrence used to write second drafts and never look at the first.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you cut what seemed to me a climactic scene from *Paul* about hashish smoking?

ISHERWOOD

Simply because it didn't relate to Paul, the character It related to me. I thought we were getting too far away from Paul.

INTERVIEWER

When I read it later in *Exhumations*, I wished you'd left it in.

ISHERWOOD

Well, we did have it in even when the book was in proof. I only cut it at the last moment. Perhaps I was wrong to do so.

INTERVIEWER

One thing that suprised me about Ambrose, from the same book (*Down There On A Visit*) was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for things Greek; you absolutely didn't partake of that special British literary worship of that part of the world.

ISHERWOOD

Well, it wasn't the best way of seeing Greece; here we were, holed up on this island, and we got rather used to it. But I remember certain things about Greece that moved me tremendously.

INTERVIEWER

Yet this Hellenic syndrome, the fetish for Greece, never shows in your writing. I'm thinking of. . . Durrell. . . lots of them from Byron onwards. Greece means to them what Italy did to Forster.

ISHERWOOD

Well, I was very prejudiced in my youth against the values of the academic world; and since then I've become prejudiced in another way, because I think that Hindu

philosophy is so much broader in its scope than that of, say, Plato. That's a temperamental thing perhaps, but I'm not really knocked over by the Greeks, I can't feel that "everything started in Greece," or "had they not been there, there would be nothing." I daresay this is my ignorance, but it's how I feel. One aspect of Italy turned me on far more. I had the atypical experience of never seeing Italy when I was young. I went first in 1955 with Don; we went like two innocents, and we were duly stunned. I was, what, 51? And I was seeing all this for the first time. It was late in the year, with few people about, and the most marvellous Indian summer. We drove through Tuscany and in Milan we met an old friend, King Vidor, who was making *War and Peace*, and took absurd home movies of that. All his best takes were ruined because the Italian extras were having such a terrific time, falling off bridges and roaring with laughter. And it all culminated in a rather banal—I suppose—experience, which was also the greatest part of the trip. We went to Venice, and arrived in a thick fog and occupied a vast suite in some grand hotel where the prices had been slashed to a tenth because of the season. And in the morning I went to the window and there was this wonderful Guardi sunlight, and the lagoon, and Santa Maria della Salute. It simply hit me over the head, and I burst into tears. I've never felt like that to the same extent, except perhaps when I saw Yosemite, which was rather different.

INTERVIEWER

Which of your books gave you the greatest trouble to write?

ISHERWOOD

That miserable *World in the Evening*, because it's several different books. You know, I almost hate that book. I hate

her,* and her pathos, and her heart disease—which I got out of a book called *When Doctors Are Patients*. It was written by doctors who had different complaints, and one of them gave a marvelous description of what it's like to have heart disease, from which I copied several scenes, the situations, that is, her terror and so on. I rewrote them completely of course. But it was a remarkable book. This doctor caught the drama of the thing, and he was objective about it. In the middle of being scared, he was saying "How interesting." This I tried to catch in describing Elizabeth Rydal and her attacks.

INTERVIEWER

What went wrong with the book?

ISHERWOOD

I started to write an "I" book about working in a Quaker hospital. And then I thought that the "I" of the story was so peculiar that I must explain how he got into a hospital at all. So I decided that he must have some sort of upset in his own life, and instead of sticking to the facts, which were far more interesting, I devised this young gentleman with a wife who is cheating on him and all that. And from then on we were in trouble. One lie leads to another and it was all so factitious and false. In the first chapter of *The World in the Evening* there's a couple making it in an outsize doll's house. This actually existed. I got to know Norma Shearer's son and went down to her beach house with him and saw this great big doll's house, big enough for children to get inside, and my first thought was, what a wonderful place to screw in. And the whole scene evolved from that idea. It'd be a nice movie. Jane, the wife, was practically the only decent character in that book. The Quaker aunt isn't too bad—perhaps a bit too

**Elizabeth Rydal, the Katherine Mansfield-type novelist who is the novel's central character.*

holy. Stephen, the principal character, is a kind of goodie-goodie, full of false humility. I know exactly what I should have done in that book. I should have written it from the point of view of a minor character, a slightly hostile person. Then it would have been all right. It would simply have sounded then as if I was a stinker. A very good thing in a novel, to have a minor character who's hostile. Maugham did it, more or less. He was looking to see what the lie was in the lives of the other characters, and when he found it he gloated appropriately.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a favourite among your books?

ISHERWOOD

Oh, *A Single Man*. I think it's the only book of mine where I did more or less what I wanted to do. It didn't get out of control.

INTERVIEWER

It's also the fiercest in tone.

ISHERWOOD

Oh, do you think so? I think it's terribly restrained.

INTERVIEWER

I meant the revenge fantasies George has driving on the freeway and so on.

ISHERWOOD

Oh, yes. I wanted to show that there was something boiling underneath. But that was a very deliberately written book. It wasn't composed with "hands trembling with fury."

INTERVIEWER

Have you tried consciously to give your later novels,

those written in America, any religious or Vedantic basis?

ISHERWOOD

In a way. The first book I wrote after I'd become involved with Vedanta was very definitely an attempt to put myself back in an earlier phase of my life and therefore I scrupulously left Vedanta out of it. There is at the end of *Prater Violet* a kind of soliloquy that's very pessimistic in tone. I made it so deliberately because I was trying to give a true account of how I felt at that time. But of course it was really conditioned by contact with Vedanta.

INTERVIEWER

Does Vedanta appear at all in *A Single Man*?

ISHERWOOD

There are touches: the image at the end of the rock pools that are separate entities while the tide is out; and then the water comes and they are all one flood of consciousness and you can't say that one is separate from the others. But of course it's not about someone who's religious in any sense. The man in *A Single Man* is a stoic, a very back-to-the-wall character.

INTERVIEWER

But possibly your belief in Vedanta influenced you to write about George in quite a different way than you otherwise would?

ISHERWOOD

Perhaps I felt more objective towards him. I really admire the sort of person that George is: it isn't me at all. Here is somebody who really has *nothing* to support him, except a kind of gradually waning animal vitality, and yet he fights, like a badger, and goes on demanding, fighting for happiness. That attitude I think rather magnificent. If I

were in George's place I would think about killing myself, because I'm less than George. George is heroic.

INTERVIEWER

But is George's life-style dreadful to you, then?

ISHERWOOD

We have to be careful about what we mean by dreadful. I don't mean I'm condemning it morally. I couldn't live it without some kind of support.

INTERVIEWER

Would you write more about homosexuality if you were starting out now as a writer?

ISHERWOOD

Yes, I'd write about it a great deal. It is an exceedingly interesting subject, and I couldn't, or I thought I couldn't go into it. It's interesting because it's so much more than just "homosexuality"; it's very precious in a way, however inconvenient it may be. You see things from a different angle, and you see how everything is changed thereby.

INTERVIEWER

Maugham's habit of writing about his male characters from a hidden gay angle gives his work a curious ambiguity.

ISHERWOOD

The book of his that seems to me most homosexual is *The Narrow Corner*. I think it's my favourite. A very romantic book. It's set on a ship. There's this beautiful boy who's wanted by everybody, including the police. There's a wonderful doctor with a Chinese assistant who smokes opium. Very glamorous. I adore that book.

INTERVIEWER

What good do you think the gay liberation movement is doing in the United States? What do you think of its tactics?

ISHERWOOD

I think it's a necessary way of doing things. It's part of an enormous uncoordinated army which is advancing on various fronts towards recognition, toleration and the acquisition of very simple rights. I never want to knock anything people do in a movement like that unless they resort to bomb-throwing or something which is completely destructive.

INTERVIEWER

How about the protests against Vice Squad tactics at the L.A. police HQ, or the disruptions at these conventions of psychiatrists who seem these days to be the arch-enemies of gay people?

ISHERWOOD

They're very valuable. I welcome them enormously. What a waste of time and taxpayer's money it is to have these healthy, well-equipped policemen used on such a frivolous chore as pushing homosexuals around in bars! This extraordinary harassment that goes on, because somebody or other is supposed to have made a complaint. And at the same time the police here are saying they need more men!

INTERVIEWER

Still, public attitudes are changing.

ISHERWOOD

Oh yes. But what irritates me is the bland way people go around saying, "Oh, our attitude has changed. We don't dislike these people any more." But by the strangest coinci-

dence, they haven't taken away the injustice, the laws are still on the books. And if you ask them why that is—"Oh, it's boring; it's difficult; how does one go about it. . ." A thing that seems to me almost worse than hatred and active opposition is the indifference that most people have towards minorities. Let them rot, they don't care, they don't care a bit! Also they're hypocritical. They pretend to be much more shocked than they are. I often feel that worse than the most fiendish Nazis were those Germans who went along with the persecution of the Jews, not because they really disliked them, but because *it was the thing*.

INTERVIEWER

I've heard you use the phrase "Whitmanesque homosexuality." What exactly do you mean?

ISHERWOOD

I had in mind the concept of two men going off together, living a life that is in many ways not confined in the sense that recognised heterosexual marriage is confined. It's a way of life that disturbs some people—quite needlessly, in my view—because there is at the back of their minds this illogical fear that *something will happen*. Their children will leap up and follow the Pied Piper, the whole structure of their lives will be changed—they don't know what the threat is. They don't know because really there is none.

INTERVIEWER

I wanted to ask your opinion of Forster's *Maurice* which was so heavily criticized, even attacked, in the British press when it came out last year. Everyone had a go at it.

ISHERWOOD

What I loved about it was its passion. There Forster really spoke.

INTERVIEWER

More than elsewhere? He always spoke in a very passionate way, wouldn't you say?

ISHERWOOD

Yes, there's a great underlying passion. But this is the only time he spoke about homosexuality, which he felt very strongly about. He had a burning indignation about the way homosexuals were treated during much of his lifetime. That I love. I love works written in passion by great writers, even when they're a bit silly. I love Tolstoy's furious essays.

INTERVIEWER

People have called *Maurice* sentimental.

ISHERWOOD

So it is, in places. But it's a daring sentimentality. It does honor to Forster as a man. We're not afraid of what's called pornography, but we are terribly afraid of what we call sentimentality—the rash, incautious expression of feeling. And yet that sort of sentimentality is something an awful lot of us need to practice. Have you seen any of Forster's homosexual stories? They're going to be published—a man wrote to me asking if the ones I had were the same as he'd seen. There's one—it's quite late—that's a tremendous melodrama of passion and fury... It takes place on a liner coming back from India. It's very moving, quite beautiful.

INTERVIEWER

Yet we have people like Muggeridge saying he "can't imagine" who reads him now.

ISHERWOOD

Forster is still Forster and he will be read. He's someone about whom I feel Thomas Hardy's lines on Meredith

apply: "No matter, further and further still thro the world's vaporous vitiate air, his words wing on, as live words will." I feel that he wings on.

INTERVIEWER

Was it E. M. Forster's writing about India and Indian religion that first interested you in the subject?

ISHERWOOD

No, I wouldn't say that was an influence. He influenced me purely as a writer, by the way that he wrote. I had a glimpse from him of a whole new approach to the novel. His casualness, the way he lounges so easily into his novels is a demonstration of something that is now really taken for granted, a kind of informality; instead of solemnly approaching the novel in the great classic manner and setting the scene, he says: one may as well begin with somebody's letters. The other people who were writing then—Wells, for example—was tremendously modern in a sense, and yet there are more vestiges of the nineteenth century in his work than in Forster's. He had relaxed and that seemed immensely valuable. Also, he said about himself that he was a comic writer: I don't think that was quite exact. I think he's more what Gerald Heard called meta-comic; a kind of comedy that goes beyond both comedy and tragedy. Both comedy and tragedy followed to the end are tiresome, sterile, empty and unsatisfactory.

INTERVIEWER

There's a lot of mysticism in his writing, too.

ISHERWOOD

Oh certainly, he was highly serious. But it's just that that whenever people are getting hi-falutin' he deflates them; and yet you never feel that he is merely sneering. He is doing it because he feels they are not really having the emotion appropriate to the occasion. In that way, both

from his writing and from knowing him, he taught me a tremendous lesson. He did just the same kind of thing in person. I remember during the Spanish Civil War, we were all showing off a little bit—I was supposed to be going out on some kind of delegation (actually I didn't go, we went to China instead) but I remember I decided I must make my will. Virginia Woolf was there too. Anyway, I was showing off a bit, and somebody said: "Morgan, why don't you come to Spain." And he said: "I'd be afraid to," and this completely deflated us. It was a remark of a really sterling character.

INTERVIEWER

Did you know Virginia Woolf well?

ISHERWOOD

Not well. She was my publisher, so to speak. Hogarth Press published *The Memorial*, *Mr. Norris*, and *Lions and Shadows*. I was fascinated by her, though. She was one of the most beautiful women I've met in my life, really absolutely stunning, in a very strange way. Of course she was middle-aged when I knew her. She had the quality that manic-depressive people have of being up to the sky one minute, down into despair and darkness the next. She had these terrible phases, as we know now: but what one saw was her tremendous animation and fun, on a gossipy level. She loved tea-table talk. One time I was at her place with a lot of people and something happened to me that's never again happened in my life. We had tea and she said, "Do stay to dinner." So I did and sat there absolutely enthralled. And suddenly, with a terrible shock, at about ten in the evening, I remembered that I was supposed to be going on a very romantic trip to Paris with somebody who was in fact waiting at the airport at that moment. I had completely forgotten about it. She had that effect on people.

INTERVIEWER

What brought you out here in the first place?

ISHERWOOD

I came out here primarily because the people I really knew in America were here. I knew Gerald Heard, and I was very anxious to talk to him about pacifism. Also I wanted very much to meet Aldous Huxley, whom I didn't know before I came here. And I'd always wanted to see the West, in a romantic sort of way; so I just took off. We came by bus, stopping at various places. It took us about a month. People said that was the way to see America; and it was, I think; better than going on the train. We started in New York, then Washington, New Orleans, El Paso, Houston and into New Mexico.

INTERVIEWER

It sounds a bit like Humbert Humbert's trip with *Lolita*.

ISHERWOOD

It does rather. I always loved the part of *Lolita*, the descriptions of the motels and that world of travel. I liked the film very much too, I'm a great fan of Kubrick.

INTERVIEWER

Heard was a pacifist, of course?

ISHERWOOD

Yes. He was one of the most astounding people I ever met. He was a wonderful myth-maker. It was something approximately like knowing Jung. He saw the great archetypes that govern life to an extraordinary extent, and he knew an immense amount about what was going on in the world, all the really important advances on different scientific fronts, and how they related to each other; and he had taken in the whole area of mysticism and reconciled that with his other areas of knowledge. And he was Irish

and had that magic gift of talk. An absolute spellbinder, and yet really extraordinarily little known.

INTERVIEWER

Was that perhaps because he wrote a body of work that makes such a complex structure. You have to read all the books to comprehend the scale. . . .

ISHERWOOD

Very complex. And also he had a very meandering and involuted style. He started with great sentences that wander on and on. There's a very crude parody of the way he talks in *Down There on a Visit*, in the character of Augustus Parr. He was the sort of person who, if you asked: "What do you think about Vietnam?" would answer, "I suppose you know, of course, Holstein's great work on the soldier ant. . ." and then go into a tremendous dissertation and about 15 minutes later you would realise that this was a very appropriate way of answering the question. By that time, however, you'd be so awfully interested in what he was saying that you'd forgotten what your question was. But if you did remember, then you saw that he did in fact answer the question. But you had to sit still for it. He gave very definite answers, yet at the same time contrived not to be dogmatic.

INTERVIEWER

What did he think of the way you portrayed him?

ISHERWOOD

I think he thought it was a bit much, a bit of a caricature. But he wasn't offended. He liked my writing quite a bit. I dedicated *A Meeting by the River* to him because he liked it so much.

INTERVIEWER

You lived close to him for several years, then?

ISHERWOOD

Very close, yes. He had an incredibly protracted death. He had a series of slight strokes and very slowly lost the faculty of speech. I think it went on for three years. And yet all the time you felt this very, very bright mind, and no distress at any of it. He seemed to live more and more in a kind of meditative state and just be aware of the body lying there, obviously irreparable and soon to be abandoned, and he finally died very unobtrusively, just as he was about to drink some soup. He had a secretary who looked after him with absolutely superhuman devotion. One thing he was afraid of, as many of us are here, was of going into a hospital. The California hospitals are really something. It's not that they're not marvellous; it's just that the most awful inhuman way to die is in one of them. Michael Barrie knew this and he looked after him day and night throughout this whole period. I don't think he would have lived much longer himself if Gerald hadn't died. He'd lost so much weight and he was like a wisp moving about. He could hardly lift Gerald at the end. He's more or less recovered physically now. He has masses and masses of material which he'll either put into shape or give to someone.

INTERVIEWER

When Aldous Huxley died he took LSD, I believe.

ISHERWOOD

An incredibly weak dose. His wife asked the doctor, and he said, "Sure, what does it matter?" Needless to say rumors got around until people were talking as if she'd performed a mercy killing or something, which was idiotic. I urged her, among other people, to print it, to stop all this nonsense. People talk about him as if he were an absolute hophead, but she told me—and she knows a good deal about drugs—that in many cases the kids who are really into this thing might take more in a single week than Aldous took in his entire life. He used very, very small

amounts and almost always under scientific conditions. . . because it began as a scientific thing. A scientist from Canada asked if he would submit to it as a scientific experiment. He was very much against indiscriminate use, and he believed that everybody took far too much.

INTERVIEWER

Stravinsky refers to you very affectionately in one of the books with Craft. What do you remember about him?

ISHERWOOD

I always think of Stravinsky in a very physical way. He was physically adorable; he was cuddly—he was so little, and you wanted to protect him. He was very demonstrative, a person who—I suppose it was his Russian-ness—was full of kisses and embraces. He had great warmth. He could be fearfully hostile and snub people and attack his critics and so forth, but personally, he was a person of immense joy and warmth. The first time I came to his house he said to me: “Would you like to hear my Mass before we get drunk?” He was always saying things like that. He seemed to me to have a wonderful appreciation for all the arts. He spoke English fluently, but it astonished me what an appreciation he had of writing in the English language, although he was really more at home in German or French—after Russian.

INTERVIEWER

In the Craft books, he manages superbly.

ISHERWOOD

Yes, they're marvellous. When I was seeing a great deal of him, I was usually drinking a great deal, too, because he had these wonderful drinks. I recall a fatal, beautiful liquid called Marc—Marc de Borgogne—made out of grape pits, colourless but powerful beyond belief. I used to think to myself, goddamit, I'm drunk again and here's Igor saying

these marvellous things and I won't remember one of them in the morning. And along came Craft's books years later, and I recognized that this was the very essence of what he'd been saying.

INTERVIEWER

He accuses you of falling asleep on one occasion during some of his music.

ISHERWOOD

Oh yes, I'm sure I did. When I think of those days, I really seem to have behaved very oddly. I remember once I'd actually passed out on the floor and looking up I saw at an immense altitude above me Aldous Huxley who was very tall, standing up and talking French to Stravinsky who never seemed to get overcome however much he drank. And Aldous, who I think was very fond of me, was looking at me rather curiously as much as to say, "Aren't you going a little far?" It's not like me to behave like that, or so I imagine. Perhaps it is. But I suddenly realized how relaxed I felt, how completely at home. It didn't matter if I blotted my copy book.

INTERVIEWER

The Marc was at work?

ISHERWOOD

Well, you can get drunk in many ways, but the Stravinskys projected the most astounding coziness. Because Vera Stravinsky was a part of it, she had enormous charm and style and she's very amusing. Going out with them was always an experience. We drove up once to the Sequoia forest and I remember Stravinsky, so tiny, looking up at this enormous giant Sequoia and standing there for a long time in meditation and then turning to me and saying: "That's serious."

INTERVIEWER

Are you musical?

ISHERWOOD

No, not at all. In the first place I'm very conventional. I don't consider that you really have a feeling about an art unless you react to its most modern manifestations. In the graphic arts I'm much more flexible and interested in all kinds of painting. But with the best will in the world, I just don't dig a lot of modern music. I like Beethoven and so on.

INTERVIEWER

But you like Stravinsky's music.

ISHERWOOD

Yes. But even with Stravinsky it took me an awfully long time.

INTERVIEWER

W. H. Auden has also worked with Stravinsky. You first knew Auden at school, didn't you?

ISHERWOOD

Yes, at my first boarding school, but he was three years younger than I. He showed absolutely no interest in poetry in those days. He was a very scientific little boy—the son of a doctor—interested in metallurgy, geology, mining. He knew a great deal about the different mines in England and he loved going on hikes in the North Country to visit them. He had a mystique, a tremendously strong myth world, that he carried with him from early childhood. Then I met him again when he was 18 and I was 21, and he showed me all the poems he had written—not at all the kind of thing he's known for now. It was imitative, but

brilliantly so; it sounded a bit like Hardy or Frost, or Edward Thomas.

INTERVIEWER

How did you work with Auden on your collaborations?

ISHERWOOD

He was constantly showing me his work and we'd discuss it. Then one day—it was in the winter of 1934-35—he sent me a play called *The Chase* and I made suggestions that would fill it out. There were parts that I could write and things that only he could write; and in this way we began to put together this enormous, loosely-constructed thing called *The Dog Beneath the Skin*. It's never been performed in its entirety, it's too long. We were truly astonished at how well it was received at a London theatre, so we thought, well, we must do this again. And we consciously thought of a subject, the study of a leader like Lawrence of Arabia, but translated into terms of mountain climbing—*The Ascent of F6*. We wanted to contrast mountain climbing for climbing's sake and mountain climbing used for political ends, just as Lawrence went into the desert first because he loved it, and ended up being used politically. Auden was the composer, the poet, and my function was to write the prose and lay out general lines. Later, Auden took over some of the prose but I didn't write a line of poetry, apart from one scrap of doggerel. By the time we reached *On The Frontier*, Auden was writing more than I, although it was still definitely a collaboration. The first play we wrote more or less by correspondence, sending each other pages. But on the second and third play we worked together, in Portugal and elsewhere. Auden, who loves to be indoors, would work inside the house, and I'd be working out in the garden. He got through his stint—including some of his finest poetry—with amazing speed. We did very little polishing; and off it went to the publishers.

INTERVIEWER

Did you see him often, or correspond?

ISHERWOOD

Oh yes, we were very close friends, but the circumstances of our lives kept us apart. Very occasionally he came here and stayed with us and sometimes we saw him in New York or England. He detested California, you know, it's too hot or bright or something. He moved to Austria, where it rains a lot; he loved that. And England too, of course.

INTERVIEWER

Do you show your work to others much? Do you ask advice on it?

ISHERWOOD

Yes, I've shown work to people on many occasions. Sometimes I've profited from it a lot. The good suggestions were usually about structure. And sometimes people have objected very strongly to something, and I've taken it out.

INTERVIEWER

You don't find any difficulty in talking about what you're working on?

ISHERWOOD

No, except that you're opening such a can of beans, you have to talk for an hour to explain what you're doing. But I've often found that simply talking about one's problems ends in you yourself coming up with the answer.

INTERVIEWER

Have you any superstitions about writing?

ISHERWOOD

I do have a sense of auspicious days. I like to celebrate some significant day by starting a new piece of work.

INTERVIEWER

Are you superstitious, period?

ISHERWOOD

Jungians say there's no such thing as an Old Wives' Tale: in other words, if people say it's bad luck to walk under ladders, there must be a reason for it. I'm negatively superstitious—which means of course that I respect the superstition, I don't disbelieve in it: I walk under ladders, find the number 13 favorable, invariably refuse to send chain letters on, because I feel there's something wrong in submitting to the evil magic of a chain letter. One has to rise above it.

INTERVIEWER

You spoke earlier of sexual abstinence and the resulting storing up of energy: is this a practice you've consciously tried in your writing?

ISHERWOOD

No, that's seen more as a means towards spiritual concentration than artistic concentration; although some artists do say that during periods of intense creativity they find the sex drive has been. . . I hate the word sublimated. . . redirected. I'm quite open to the argument that it would work with anything. But in my case it was concerned with the period when I was trying to live a monastic life at the Vedanta Center in Los Angeles.

INTERVIEWER

Was there a moment when you knew that you would be a writer?

ISHERWOOD

I feel I always wanted to be a writer. My father, without, I think, realizing what he was doing, made me think of writing as play rather than work. He was always telling me stories, encouraging me, taking an interest in my toy theatre and so on. And it seems to me that writing has been a game that I have gone on playing ever since. I am inclined to think of writers who bore me as being “workers.”

INTERVIEWER

Both your parents wrote well, didn't they? Your father's letters in *Kathleen and Frank* are very observant.

ISHERWOOD

That's partly because he was quite a good artist. I've never known an artist who couldn't write better than average. Their eye for detail and power of describing people is remarkable. I see this in Don Bachardy and all my friends who are artists. They write letters that are full of understanding and observation. My father had that to a great extent. In one of his letters from South Africa during the Boer War there's a beautiful passage about the deep blue light which is reflected from the roofs of corrugated iron out on the Veldt, and how ridiculous it is to call corrugated iron ugly. He looked at a thing and asked himself, “What does it look like?” not “What is the popular preconception?” One of my earliest memories is that once, when I was trying to paint, imitating him, he asked me: “What color is that tree?” I said it was green, of course: trees as a genus are green. “No it isn't,” he said. And in that light, when I *looked*, the tree was blue.

INTERVIEWER

Are you a constant observer, consciously looking for things you can use as a writer?

ISHERWOOD

I think I'm a very unobservant person, one who goes straight to concepts about people and ignores evidence to the contrary and the bric-a-brac surrounding that person. Stephen Spender said an amusing thing about Yeats—that he went for days on end without noticing anything, but then, about once a month, he would look out of a window and suddenly be aware of a swan or something, and it gave him such a stunning shock that he'd write a marvellous poem about it. That's more the kind of way I operate: suddenly something pierces the reverie and self-absorption that fill my days and I see with a tremendous flash the extraordinariness of that person or object or situation.

INTERVIEWER

Can you say something about the process of turning a real person into a fictional character?

ISHERWOOD

It happens through the process of thinking of them in their eternal, magic, symbolic aspects: it's rather the way you feel when you fall in love with somebody and that person ceases to be just another face in the crowd. The difference is that in art, almost by definition, everybody is quite extraordinary, if only you can see them as such. When you're writing a book, you ask yourself: what is it that so intrigues me about this person—be it good or bad, that's neither here nor there, art knows nothing of such words. Having discovered what it is you really consider to be the essence of the interest you feel in this person, you then set about heightening it. The individuals themselves aren't quite up to this vision you have of them. Therefore you start trying to create a fiction-character that is quintessentially what you see as interesting in the individual, without all the contradictions that are inseparable from a human being, aspects that don't seem exciting or marvellous or beautiful. The last thing you're trying to do is get

an overall picture of somebody, since then you'd end up with nothing.

INTERVIEWER

Is writing pleasurable?

ISHERWOOD

It's almost beyond the question of pleasure, isn't it? Is it pleasurable to work out at the gym? It is and it isn't, but you have the feeling while you're doing it that it's something on the plus side. You're very absorbed in writing and you don't ask yourself if it's pleasurable or distasteful. Making yourself write can be painful, and wonderful when you do. The will has asserted itself and you feel good again.

INTERVIEWER

If you had to advise a young writer, what sort of pitfalls would you warn him against?

ISHERWOOD

Hard to say. It depends much more on your character than your talent. Some pursuits could be dangerous for a writer without much stamina. But I think, if you have enough drive and strength, there's very little that's going to hurt you. Many remarkable writers not only survive immense amounts of hack-work, they gain know-how from it. Writers who've been in the newspaper business for example—instead of moaning and regarding themselves as slaves and prostitutes, they've in fact learnt how to write more concisely. George Borrow, who wrote the most mountainous works of sheer plodding involving an enormous output of energy, was still able to write *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*, which to me are two of the most fascinating books ever written.

INTERVIEWER

Well, do you think writers who settle down in California, in the entertainment industry, compromise themselves in some way, or is that a fiction?

ISHERWOOD

I'll bet Shakespeare compromised himself a lot; anybody who's in the entertainment industry does to some extent. But are you going to sink or swim? There's a most awful daintiness in the idea that everything you write should be just so—perfection—and all the rest carefully destroyed so that it won't hurt your image. Often this is a dangerous kind of vanity. Goodness knows, I've written lots of stuff that I hate, but there it is, flapping around in the vaults of various motion picture studios; and sometimes I've done good work for the cinema. If you want the money and you want to live that way, you've just got to take it. I suppose, under ideal circumstances, I would say, have some other profession and keep your writing for yourself. That amazing man Henry Yorke, who writes under the name of Henry Green, has found time during most of his adult life to run a big business and yet, every day, he put in a stint of work on one of his novels. You can survive anything if you've got the stamina.

INTERVIEWER

What's your favorite novel about the entertainment industry?

ISHERWOOD

I'm very fond of Fitzgerald's unfinished last novel, *The Last Tycoon*. I never met him, but I don't think Fitzgerald was too worried about "compromise": he wrote a lot of stuff for magazines and so forth that wasn't up to his standards.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever consciously change or adopt a way of life or accept friendships that you felt would help you as a writer?

ISHERWOOD

No. I didn't, for example, go to Germany because I thought it was a marvellous untilled field to cultivate. I personally believe that there is a part of one's subconscious will that directs one's life, that there is a part of me that is carrying out long-range schemes. I believe that this part of my will also knows when I shall die, and how much time I've got and everything else. I believe it has schemes which often, in my ignorance, I frustrate—schemes which are not always necessarily for the best. But I'm quite willing to suppose that it was this part of my will that caused me to go to Germany, or to California. . . . I see certain places as symbols in one's consciousness. I found the notion of the Far West infinitely romantic. I used to be thrilled by the expression *l'extrême Orient*. If you tell me that Bray Head is the westernmost point in Europe, I immediately experience a slight desire to go there. But no conscious voice said it would be a smart thing to go to Germany or California. It might be a good thing for a writer to go to prison, or be sentenced to death and reprieved at the last moment, like Dostoevsky; I daresay it did wonders for his writing; and maybe this unconscious director steered him along those paths. Who can tell?

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever been completely stuck on a book?

ISHERWOOD

Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER

And how'd you get unstuck?

ISHERWOOD

Patience. Persistence. Putting it away and then coming back to it. Never allowing myself to get frantic. Repeating to myself, "There's no deadline; it'll be finished when it's finished." Sometimes, I can get a helpful idea from the unconscious by irritating it—deliberately writing nonsense until it intervenes, as it were, saying, "All right, idiot, let me fix this."

INTERVIEWER

Did you like the film of *Cabaret*?

ISHERWOOD

Oh, a bit. . .

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a work in progress?

ISHERWOOD

What I'm writing now is simply a reconstruction of some diaries which I failed to keep. I have a fairly continuous narrative of the years 1939 to '44. I not only kept a diary, I wrote fill-in passages to explain things that were missing. More or less at the time. Then again, from about 1955 on to the present day I kept a diary on and off, at least a couple of entries a month. But there's a very bald patch in between from '45 to '53 and that I'm trying to fill out. I have this one thing to clue me in, which is that aside from trying to keep a journal, I keep a day-to-day diary in which I say things like who came to the house where we had supper, if we saw a movie or a play. It's very convenient for remembering names, and when things happened. And out of these diaries, I'm trying to reconstruct what happened all those years ago. In those days I wasn't as careful as I am now. I'm horrified to find, as I look at these diaries of 25 years ago or more, that I don't remember who the people were. "Bill and Tony were constantly

in and out. We went to La Jolla"—or something. I haven't the bluest idea who they were! That requires quite a lot of research—I spent some time at UCLA the other day looking up things. It's a lot of fun, but whether it will amuse anyone else is another matter. I'm doing it entirely for myself. This diary-writing is tremendously useful. I've quarried into it—the other diaries—for a lot of my books.

INTERVIEWER

Would you think of publishing what you're working on now in your lifetime?

ISHERWOOD

No, it couldn't be in my lifetime. In writing these diaries, I've got into the whole sex thing: I became interested in thinking why one does certain things, why one's attracted to certain people—one's type, as they used to say, one's ideal. Is that really true? Does one really have a "type?" What do people represent as archetypes, so to speak? It's been my experience, and I'm sure lots of people's, there is an ideal person who you imagine is your, ah, *dream*; but if you examine your life, you seem to find that if in fact you did meet someone who resembled that person, you didn't have any relationship with him at all, or only a very unsatisfactory one, and the really important relationships occurred with quite other people. So the question arises: why is that? I've been going into all this, using for my text any actual relationships I had during this period. But I've got rather carried away by the subject and I've gone back to earlier experiences to fill it out. It's perhaps the kind of thing you can only do in your old age. Sometimes you find an encounter with someone who is so stunningly what you think you want that the whole encounter becomes purely symbolic—it doesn't really mean anything at all. Like a restaurant: it's good because it's Chasen's. You don't really ask yourself if it's good, you just say "Wow. . . I got to eat at the Four Seasons," or whatever it is. But it's just about

whatever happened to happen in those years. In general, I've been rather discreet otherwise in my diaries.

INTERVIEWER

You spoke somewhere of a project called the *Autobiography of my Books*.

ISHERWOOD

Yes. I even gave some lectures about it at Berkeley, about 1959. I thought I would describe the principal subjects in my books and point out that every writer has certain subjects that they write about again and again, and that most people's books are just variations on certain themes. I thought I'd like to write a book about this. And then I realized that I didn't know nearly enough about my principal themes, which were my father and mother, and the home place, and one's longing to get away from it, and what that's represented by: the other place. So I started studying my parents' letters and diaries, and I got into writing *Kathleen and Frank*. The other project was abandoned, but if anybody ever wanted to know where a lot of stuff in my books comes from, they would find the answers in *Kathleen and Frank*.

INTERVIEWER

Is there a book you would like to write, but haven't?

ISHERWOOD

I'm interested in writing something about now. Old age. I've never read anything except Gide's *The Chips are Down* which seemed satisfactory, a marvellous book about old age.

INTERVIEWER

It isn't a subject people like very much.

ISHERWOOD

No, exactly, it's one of those subjects that people think are an absolute bore.

INTERVIEWER

You never seem too oppressed by what so many Europeans moan about here—vulgarity, crassness, all the rest of it.

ISHERWOOD

I think I'd been prepared for it. I was shocked, in 1939, by what I saw of the segregation in travelling across the United States. I could never understand that it applied to *me*, personally. I caused great distress once by sitting in the wrong section of a train. I was hot and tired and in a hurry and jumped into a coach and slowly became aware that the coach was for black people. And I thought, well, this is California now, we're not segregated officially. But I soon saw that I was really causing great uneasiness, everyone wanted me to leave. I didn't understand all these ramifications.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a special liking for the Southern Californian way of living?

ISHERWOOD

Well, there are certain things you have to get used to like driving on the freeways, which some people find shattering, and a certain kind of ugliness, which is only ugliness in the eye of the beholder. There is enormous beauty here; the coastline is still magnificent. But to me it means an ideal place to work. It's my home now. I've lived here half my life, much longer than anywhere else. I travelled about so much when I was young, I never had a home before. This place seems to fit me like a glove. And beyond that there's a tremendous kind of vitality.

INTERVIEWER

You sometimes seem very defensive in your books about America. There's the scene in *A Single Man*, for instance, in which George assails a woman who is vaunting the naturalness of Mexico above the United States. . .

ISHERWOOD

I used to hear a lot against America when I went back to England. People took such very superior attitudes. They don't understand a bit what the feeling is here, what it's all about. I feel it's so easy to condemn this country; but they don't understand that this is where the mistakes are being made—and made first, so that we're going to get the answers first. I feel that very strongly. I feel it's marvellous the way we talk about our failings. You know, there's an odd quotation in one of Edward Upward's novels: something like "We shall not perish, because we are not afraid to speak of our failings, and thus we shall learn to overcome our failings." It's a quotation from Stalin! Really! But it could be said here. We really do, in spite of our failings, in spite of everything, really air things here. Quite brutally. It's a violent country, and this, at least historically, is one of the more violent states. It's no place for people who want to sleep quietly in their beds.

— W. I. Scobie

Gevorg Emin

The Block

For two months
I have not written
a word.

My voice, a low
grumble, disturbs
our quarter

like the rumble
of the millstone
which having nothing to grind
grinds itself.

*Translated from the Armenian by
Diana Der Hovanessian*

We Never Discuss Trapping Monkeys

You know how it's done of course
with bottles and sugar. The monkey thrusts
in a paw and can't extricate
his fist without giving up his bait
and won't. He's captured thus.
But why should monkeys concern us?

*Translated from the Armenian by
Diana Der Hovanessian*

Ricardo da Silveira Lobo Sternberg

Song of a Crow Dying

goodbye to the sun
my father
who blessed me
obstinately everyday.
I cursed not being made
in the image of your brightness.

you blessed me.
I grew darker.

my mother the moon
did no better.
her love for white
silkgowns, slippers,
betrayed her rejection.

goodbye to the corn
cathedral of sweetness
forgive me farmers
my own small weakness.

forgive me also field-mice, my brothers.
but as Nietzsche did say
“you can scream
and you can bite
but you do not have the right
of calling the bird
of prey
to account
for being a bird
of prey.”

you were always delicious.

my little sisters:
the ants;
a few words of advice.
life is short.
try not to work
so much of it away.
I leave knowing
that like Antigone
you will come out
and bury your brother.

that you do so in self-interest
does not diminish my gratitude.

finally, goodbye
to the scarecrow
who kept his arms out
steady that I might land.

his, the only love I knew.

David Kelly

Counting a Decade

A crow waits in the top of a tree
for the racoon to leave its dead mate
in the road. The bird shifts a claw
on its branch and chestnuts fall.

I am at a window on the third floor
of an old house. I have just read
a poem I wrote ten years ago. I like it.

In town only the old men on street
corners discuss the history of spring.
Downstairs in the master bedroom
my wife and youngest daughter sleep.
One flight further down the television
kills two hours until the evening news.

It is the Lenten season, as it has been
thirty-four other times in my life
and I am still not Catholic. Ten years
ago I was without hope. Now I am hopeless.

Even my mother has given up wringing
her hands when she sees me, even
my employers are tired of shaking their
heads. Listen. Today, washing my hair
in the bathtub, I got shampoo in

my eyes. For ten minutes the pain
was more important than all your wars.
Or this. My daughter, up from her nap

has tiptoed up the stairs and, still
a little sleepy, is tugging at the
edges of my sweater as I stand here.
Her hands are the smallest in the world.

A Backyard for the Dead to Rest In

Somewhere on a manicured street
a poem is waiting, poised behind a lace curtain
only its gloved right hand showing
as it pulls the cloth aside a moment
in order to check the progress of blossoms
on a neighbor's cherry tree
on Fancher Street in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
years before any of you died or even
clutched a diseased stomach, back
when pain was as simple as a baseball my father
threw too hard in my aunt and uncle's
backyard, into my gloved hand
that peers through a poem now, through curtains
and into a manicured street to check
cherry trees in a backyard where
the dead can come and rest a moment.

Greg Kuzma

Poem

I go to the closet to select a tie.
I say to myself what could happen.
I go for a tie only.
But there is no tie there I like enough
to choose.
Who would have guessed this might happen.
My mother, and laughing to herself.

I look for my hand at the end of my arm
and it is there but it will not work.
I have nothing to do but still it will
not work.
Who would have guessed such a hand
would depress me.
What do I ask of a hand.
That it be soft like my mother's.
That it be hard like my father's.
That it be bigger than my son's.
That it tear out the hearts of strangers.
My mother, she would have guessed it.

And so you have learned two things
about her already:
She has no one to laugh with,
she is surprised by nothing.

The Piano Lesson

A man is teaching his son to play the piano. He tells the boy, the piano loves to be touched. On the counter near the two of them they have a bowl of fruit which the mother is painting for the first still life in her art class. Part way through the lesson the father eats a banana and the son has an orange. The keys get sticky from the sweetness on their hands. They have to stop fooling around and wipe them off with a paper towel slightly damp. The piano has been in the family for a long time, the father eyes it strangely. He has never understood its spell over him. But today the boy doesn't seem at all interested. After five more minutes they get up and go out into the yard. The father regrets very much the fruit they have eaten.

Everyone

Everyone is dead, has been dead
for a long time, we are merely their
words trying to find a place to hide.
No, we are the skin the sea once wore
but outgrew, little scraps of it, but
put us all together we could sheath the
world. No, we are the residue left over
from the candle of dreams burned out.
The dreams are beautiful, let me tell you
the ones in my family. The dreams are
costly, there are some we would forget.
No, we are the tongues that have taken
up the fight against silence, knowing
that silence has all the staying
power. Our most trusted weapon, metaphor,
but even it crumbles. No, we are the
patient come back from the treatment,
and now the whole world is our bed.
(Out by ourselves on the lawn we are
the worm the early bird comes for.
Alone in the room we hear the clothes
talking to each other. Our name comes
up, it is quite a shock.) No, we are
the shadow yesterday throws on the
future, its great plans. Nothing will
ever come true with so much at stake —

we can only lose. No, we are the fortune
our spirits saved one night from a
poker game. No, we are bones stranded
here by a dog underground — now and then
he digs us up. The sun shines on our
cold skin, we call that day. No, we
are the scattered wreckage the river
of night left behind when it dried up.
I am an old TV showing I'VE GOT A SECRET,
you are a sofa that smells of fish. No,
we are in a great hall which is empty.
There will be a performance someday.
There are lots of seats for the people.
We are musical instruments. And we
have great potential for beauty.

Richard Frost

The Tyger

At this moment I am wearing what you bought me:
bikini underpants with that striped beast
sewn onto the front, whereof the quilted silk
is meant to flatter like a secret codpiece.

He is cleansed of the old problems about his sinews.

What has nothing to do with the sporting life
is not in the cartoon. That caged animal

we watched, the shoulder blades, biceps and claws,
roaring over his meat at the feeding hour,

is here reduced to a wink that I am a rascal —

the rogueish furry tail, the friendly paunch,

the silly whiskers. *Oh, what have you been up to,*

Old Fearful? What the hand, dare seize the fire?

Any likely one is encouraged, I gather

from that roving eye. So much for him.

I'll buy you an article of softest clothing,

wooly bright, with that other beast on the front —

a lamb, rampant. We can make pets of our symbols.

Yours needs training, else it may worry my tyger

the rest of his way to death, and then defoliate

Kingdom Come. Ah, love, let us undress.

The Little Girl

Grace Paley

My old friend Charley that I've known for 20, 25 years stopped me in the street. He said, I've got something to tell you. Now, sit down. Right here. That was the steps of the Cafe Zipp in the middle of Macdougall Street. He put his hand on my knee. Then he said, now you listen, this is what happened:

Carter stop by the cafe early. I just done waxing. He said, I believe I'm having company later on. Let me use your place, Charley, hear?

I told him, door is open, go ahead. Man coming for the meter, (why I took the lock off.) I told him Angie, my lodger *could* be home but he strung out most the time. He don't even know when someone practicing the horn in the next room. Carter, you got hours and hours. There ain't no wine there, nothing like it. He said he had some other stuff would keep him on top. That was a joke. Thank you, brother, he said. I told him I believe I *have* tried anything,

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but to this day, I like whiskey. If you have whiskey, you drunk, but if you pumped up with drugs, you just crazy. Yeah hear that man, he said. Then his eyeballs start walking away.

He went right to the park. Park is full of little soft, yellow-haired baby chicks. They ain't but babies. They far from home and you better believe it, they love them big black cats walking around before lunchtime, jutting their apparatus. They think they gonna leap off that to heaven. Maybe so.

Nowadays, the spades around here got it set out for them. When I was young, *I* put that kettle to cook. *I* stirred it and stirred it, and these dudes just sucking off the gravy.

Next thing: Carter rested himself on the bench. He look this way and that. His pants is tight. His head making pictures. Along comes this child. She just straggling along. Got her big canvas pocket book and she looking around. Carter hollers out, Hey, sit down, he says. By me, here, you pretty thing. She look sideways. Sits, on the edge.

Where you from, baby? he ask her. Hey, relax, you with friends.

Oh thank you. Oh the midwest, she says. Near Chicago. She want to look good. She ain't from maybe 800 miles.

You left home for a visit, you little dandylion you, your boy friend let you just go?

Oh, no, she says, getting talky. I just left and for good. My mother don't let me do a thing. I got to do the breakfast dishes when I get home from school and clean and do my two brothers' room and they don't have to do nothing. And I got to be home in my room by 10 P.M. weekdays and 12 P.M. just when the fun starts Saturday and nothing is going on in that town. Nothing! It's dead, a sleeping hollow. *And the prejudice, whew!* She blushes up a little, she don't want to hurt his feelings. It's terrible and then they caught me out with a little bit of a roach I got off of some fellow from New York who was passing through and

I couldn't get out at all for a week. They was watching me and watching. They're disgusting and they're so ignorant!

My! Carter says. I don't know how you kids today stand it. The world is changing that's a fact and the old folks ain't heard the news. He ruffle her hair and he lay his cheek on her hair a minute. Testing. And he puts the tip of his tongue along the tip of her ear. He's a fine looking man, you know, a nice color, medium not too light. Only thing wrong with him is some blood line in his eye.

I don't know when I seen a prettier chick, he says. Just what we call fattening the pussy. Which wouldn't use up no time he could see. She look at him right away, Oh lord, I been trudging around. I am tired. Yawns.

He says, I got a nice place, you could just relax and rest and decide what to do next. Take a shower. Whatever you like. Anyways you do is O.K. My you are sweet. You better'n Miss America. How old you say you was?

Eighteen, she jump right in.

He look at her satisfied, but that was a lie and Carter knew it, I believe. That the Number One I hold against him. Because, why her? Them little girls just flock, they do. A grown man got to use his sense.

Next thing: They set out for my apartment which is 6, 7 blocks downtown. Stop for a pizza. 'Mm this is good, she says (she is so simple). She says, they don't make 'em this way back home.

They proceed. I seen Carter courting before. Canvas pocketbook across his shoulder. They holding hands maybe and hand swinging.

Open the front door of 149, but when they through struggling up them four flights, she *got* to be disappointed, you know my place, nothing there. I got my cot. There's a table. There two chairs. Blanket on the bed. And a pillow. And a old greasy pillow slip. I'm too old now to give up my grizzly greasy head, but I sure wish I was a young buck, I would let my Afro flare *out*.

She got to be disappointed.

Wait a minute, he says, goes to the kitchen and brings back ice water, a box of pretzels. Oh thank you, she says. Just what I wanted. Then he says, rest yourself darling, and she lies down. Down, right in her coffin.

He shares out a joint with her. Ain't that peaceful, he says. Oh, it is, she says. It sure is peaceful. People don't know.

Then they finish up. Just adrift in agreement, and he says, you like to ball? She says, Man! Do I! Then he put up her dress and take down her panties and tickle her here and there nibbling away. He says, you like that baby? Man! I sure do, she says. A colored boy done that to me once back home, it sure feels good.

Right then he gets off his clothes. Gonna tend to business. Now, the bad thing there, is, the way Carter told it, and I know it' so, those little girls come around looking for what they used to, hot dog. And what they get is knock-wurst. You know we are like that. Matter of fact, Carter did force her. Had to. She starting to holler, Ow, it hurts, you killing me, it hurts. But Carter told me, it was her asked for it. Tried to get away, but he had been stiff as stone since morning when he stop by the store. He wasn't *about* to let her run.

Did you hit her? I said. Now Carter, I ain't gonna tell anyone. But I got to know.

I might of hauled off and let her have it once or twice. Stupid little cunt asked for it, didn't she. She was so little, there wasn't enough meat on her thigh bone to feed a sick dog. She could of wriggled by the scoop in my armpit if I had let her. Our black women ain't a bit like that, I told you Charlie. They cook it up, they eat the mess they made. They proud.

I didn't let that ride too long. Carter's head moves quick, but he don't dust me. I ask him, how come when they passing the plate and you is presented with the choice, you say like the prettiest dude — a little of that white stuff please man?

I don't! He hollered like I had chopped his neck. And I won't! He grab my shirt front. It was a dirty old workshirt and it tore to bits in his hand. He got solemn. Shit! You right! They are poison! They killing me! That diet gonna send me upstate for nothin' but *bone* diet and I got piles as is.

Joking by the side of the grave trench. That's why I used to like him. He wasn't usual. That's why I like to pass time with Carter in the park in the early evening.

Be cool, I said.

Right on, he said.

He told me he just done shooting them little cotton head darkies into her when Mangie Angie Em poriore lean on the doorway. Girl lying on my bloody cot pulling up a sheet, crying, bleeding out between her legs. Carter had tore her up some. You know Charlie he said, I ain't one of your little Jewboy buddies with half of it cut off. Angie peering and peering. Carter stood up out of his working position. He took a quick look at Angie, hoisted his pants and split. He told me, Man, I couldn't stay there, that dumb cunt sniffing and that blood spreading out around her, she didn't get up to protect herself, she was disgusting and that low white bug your friend, crawled in from under the kitchen sink. Now on you don't live with no white junkie, hear me Charlie, they can't use it.

Where you going now Carter, I ask him. To the pigs he says and jabs his elbow downtown, I hear they looking for me.

That' exactly what he done and he never seen free daylight since.

Not too long that same day they came for me. They know where I am. At the station they said, you sleep somewhere else tonight and tomorrow night. Your place padlocked. You wouldn't want to see it, Charlie. You in the clear. We know your whereabouts to the minute. Sergeant could see I didn't know nothing. Didn't want to tell me neither. I'll explain it. They had put out a warrant for

Angel. Didn't want me speaking to him. Telling him anything.

Hector the beatcop over here, can't keep nothing to himself. They are like that. Spanish people. Chatter chatter. What he said: You move Charlie. You don't want to see that place again. Bed smashed in. That little girl broken up in the bottom of the airshaft on top of the garbage and busted glass. She just tossed out that toilet window wide awake alive. They know that. Death occur on ground contact.

The next day I learned worse. Hector found me outside the store. My buffer swiped. Couldn't work. He said: Every bone between her knee and her rib cage broken, splintered. She been brutally assaulted with a blunt instrument or a fist before death.

Worse than that, on her legs high up, inside she been bitten like an animal bit her and bit her and tore her little meat she had on her. I said: All right Hector. Shut up. Don't speak.

They put her picture in the paper every day for five days and when her mother and daddy came on the fifth day, they said: The name of our child is Juniper. She is 14 years old. She been a little rebellious but the kids today all like that.

Then court. I had a small job to say, Yes it was my place, Yes, I told Carter he could use it. Yes, Angie was my roommate and sometimes he lay around there for days. He owed me two months rent. That' the reason I didn't put him out.

In court Carter said, Yes I did force her, but he said he didn't do nothing else.

Angie said, I did smack her when I seen what she done, but I never bit her your honor, I ain't no animal, that black hippie must of.

Nobody said — they couldn't drag out of anyone — they lacking the evidence who it was picked her up like she was

nothing, a bag of busted bones and dumped her out the fourth floor window.

But wasn't it a shame, them two studs. Why they take it out on her? After so many fluffy little chicks. They could of played her easy. Why Carter seen it many times hisself. She could of stayed the summer. We just like the U.N. Every state in the union stop by. She would of got her higher education right on the fourth floor front. September, her mama and daddy would come for her and they whip her bottom, we know that. We been in this world long enough. We seen lots of the little girls. They go home, then after awhile they get to be grown womens they integrating the swimming pool and picketing the supermarket they blink their eyes and shut their mouth and grin.

But that was my room and my bed so I don't forget it. I don't stop thinking! That child. That child. And it come to me yesterday, I laydown after work: Maybe it wasn't no one. Maybe she pull herself the way she was, crumpled, to that open window. She was tore up, she must of thought she was gutted inside her skin. She must of been in a horror what she got to remember what her folks would see. Her life look to be disgusting like a squashed fish, so what she did: she made up some power somehow and raise herself up that window sill and hook herself onto it and then what I see, she just topple herself out. That' what I think right now.

That is what happened.

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973)

A small portfolio in honor of Pablo Neruda, Chilean poet who won the Nobel Prize last year, has been selected from Estravagario, translated by Alastair Reid. Under the title of Extravagaria, and originally written in 1958, the complete translation will be published by Farrar, Straus, & Giroux this Spring.

Where Can Guillermina be?

Where can Guillermina be?

When my sister invited her
and I went out to open the door,
the sun came in, the stars came in,
two tresses of wheat came in
and two inexhaustible eyes.

I was fourteen years old,
brooding, a proud of it,
slim, lithe and frowning,
funereal and formal.
I lived among the spiders,
dank from the forest,
the beetles knew me,
and the three-coloured bees.
I slept among partridges,
hidden under the mint.

Then Guillermina entered
with her blue lightning eyes
which swept across my hair
and pinned me like swords
against the wall of winter.
That happened in Temuco,
there in the South, on the frontier.

The years have passed slowly,
pacing like pachiderms,
barking like crazy foxes.
The soiled years have passed,
waxing, worn, funereal,
and I walked from cloud to cloud,
from land to land, from eye to eye,
while the rain on the frontier
fell in its same grey shape.

My heart has travelled
in the same pair of shoes,
and I have digested the thorns.
I had no rest where I was:
where I hit out, I was struck,
where they murdered me I fell;
and I revived, as fresh as ever,
and then and then and then and then --
it all takes so long to tell.

I have nothing to add.

I came to live in this world.

Where can Guillermina be?

Larynx

Now this is it, said Death,
and as far as I could see
Death was looking at me, at me.

This all happened in hospital,
in washed out corridors,
and the doctor peered at me
with periscopic eyes.
He stuck his head in my mouth,
scratched away at my larynx —
perhaps a small seed
of death was stuck there.

At first, I turned into smoke
so that the cindery one
would pass and not recognize me.
I played the fool, I grew thin,
pretended to be simple or transparent —
I wanted to be a cyclist
to pedal out of death's range.

Then rage came over me
and I said, 'Death, you bastard,
must you always keep butting in?
Haven't you enough with all those bones?
I'll tell you exactly what I think:
you have no discrimination, you're deaf
and stupid beyond belief.

'Why are you following me?
What do you want with my skeleton?
Why don't you take the miserable one,
the cataleptic, the smart one,
the bitter, the unfaithful, the ruthless,
the murderer, the adulterers,
the two-faced judge,
the deceiving journalist,
tyrants from islands,
those who set fire to mountains,
the chiefs of police,
jailers and burglars?
Why do you have to take me?
What business have I with Heaven?
Hell doesn't suit me —
I feel fine on the earth.'

With such internal mutterings
I kept myself going
while the restless doctor
went tramping through my lungs
from bronchea to bronchea
like a bird from branch to branch.
I couldn't feel my throat;
my mouth was open like
the jaws of a suit of armour,
and the doctor ran up and down
my larynx on his bicycle,
till, serious and certain,
he looked at me through his telescope
and pried me loose from death.

It wasn't what they had thought.
It wasn't my turn.

If I tell you I suffered a lot,
and really loved the mystery,
that Our Lord and Our Lady
were waiting for me in their oasis,
if I talk of disenchantment,
and being eaten by by distress
at not being close to dying,
if I say like a stupid chicken
that I die by not dying,
give me a boot in the butt,
fit punishment for a liar.

Emerging

A man says yes without knowing
how to decide even what the question is,
and is caught up, and then is carried along
and never again escapes from his own cocoon;
and that's how we are, forever falling
into the deep well of other beings;
and one thread wraps itself around our necks,
another entwines a foot, and then it is impossible,
impossible to move except in the well —
nobody can rescue us from other people.

It seems as if we don't know how to speak;
it seems as if there are words which escape,
which are missing, when have gone away and left us
to ourselves, tangled up in snares and threads.

And all at once, that's it; we no longer know
what it's all about, but we are deep inside it,
and now we will never see with the same eyes
as once we did when we were children playing.
Now these eyes are closed to us,
now our hands emerge from different arms.

And therefore when you sleep, you are alone in your
dreaming,
and running freely through the corridors
of one dream only, which belongs to you.
Oh never let them come to steal our dreams,
never let them entwine us in our bed.
Let us hold on to the shadows
to see if, from our own obscurity,
we emerge and grope along the walls,
lie in wait for the light, to capture it,
till, once and for all time,
it becomes our own, the sun of every day.

The citizen

I went into the toolshops
in all innocence
to buy a simple hammer
or some vague scissors.
I should never have done it.
Since then and restlessly
I devote my time to steel,
to the most shadowy tools:
hoes bring me to my knees,
horseshoes enslave me.

I am troubled all week,
chasing aluminium clouds,
elaborate screws,
bars of silent nickel,
unnecessary door-knockers,
and now the toolshops
are aware of my addiction —
they see me come into the cave
with my wild madman's eyes
and see that I pine for
curious smoky things
which no one would want to buy
and which I only goggle at.

For in the addict's dream
sprout stainless steel flowers,
endless iron blades,
eye-droppers of oil,
water-dippers of zinc,
saws of marine cut.
It's like the inside of a star,
the light in these toolshops —

there in their own splendour
are the essential nails,
the invincible latchkeys,
the bubbles in spirit levels
and the tangles of wire.

They have a whale's heart,
these toolshops of the port –
they've swallowed all the seas,
all the bones of ships,
waves and ancient tides
come together there
and leave behind in that stomach
barrels which rumble about,
ropes like gold arteries,
anchors as heavy as planets,
long and intricate chains
like intestines of the whale itself
and harpoons it swallowed, swimming
east from the Gulf of Penas.

Once I entered, I never left
and never stopped going back;
and I've never got away from
the aura of toolshops.
It's like my home ground,
it teaches me useless things,
it drowns me like nostalgia.

What can I do? There are single men
in hotels, in bachelor rooms;
there are patriots with drums
and inexhaustible fliers
who rise and fall in the air.

I am not in your world.
I'm a dedicated citizen,
I belong to the toolshops.

Sweetness, always

Why such harsh machinery?
Why, to write down the stuff
and people of every day,
must poems be dressed up in gold,
in old and fearful stone?

I want verses of felt or feather
which scarcely weigh, mild verses
with the intimacy of beds
where people have loved and dreamed.
I want poems stained
by hands and everydayness.

Verses of pastry which melt
into milk and sugar in the mouth,
air and water to drink,
the bites and kisses of love.
I long for eatable sonnets,
poems of honey and flour.

Vanity keeps prodding us
to lift ourselves skyward
or to make deep and useless
tunnels underground.
So we forget the joyous
love-needs of our bodies.
We forget about pastries.
We are not feeding the world.

In Madras a long time since,
I saw a sugary pyramid,
a tower of confectionery —
one level after another,
and in the construction, rubies,
and other blushing delights,
medieval and yellow.

Someone dirtied his hands
to cook up so much sweetness.

Brother poets from here
and there, from earth and sky,
from Medellín, from Veracruz,
Abyssinia, Antofagasta,
do you know the recipe for honeycombs?

Let's forget about all that stone.

Let your poetry fill up
the equinoctial pastry shop
our mouths long to devour —
all the children's mouths
and the poor adults' also.
Don't go on without seeing,
relishing, understanding
all these hearts of sugar.

Don't be afraid of sweetness.

With us or without us,
sweetness will go on living
and is infinitely alive,
forever being revived,
for it's in a man's mouth,
whether he's eating or singing,
that sweetness has its place.

Sonata with some pine trees

In the half-sun of long days
let us draw our tired bones together

let us forget the unfaithful ones
the unfeeling friends

the sun wavers among the pine trees
let us forget those who are unaware

there are lands within the land
small uncared-for countries

let us not think of the happy ones
let us forget their false teeth

let the sensitive once sleep
on their fine feather beds

you have to know particular stones
full of layers and secrets

to rise with the greening light
with the despair of trains

and touch that crust of the world
which always travelled with us

let us forget the one who is hurt
who feeds on a single setback

the trees above leave open
a half-circle criss-crossed

with wires of pine and shadow
with the air shedding its leaves

let us forget with generosity
those who cannot love us

those who look for fire and fall
like us into oblivion

there is nothing better than
early morning at the sea-foam

a dog approaches and smells the sea
suspicious of the water

all the time the waves keep arriving
dressed in white for school

there is a tang of sun and salt
and from the mortuary of the seaweed
rises the smell of birth and decay

what justifies not being?
where did other people take you?

it is good to have a change of clothes
of skin of hair of work

to get to know the earth a little
to give your woman new kisses

to be a part of clear air
to disdain all oligarchies

when I went from fog to fog
navigating by my hat

I never found anyone with directions
they were all preoccupied

they were all off to sell things
nobody asked me who I was

till I got to recognizing myself
till I set off a smile

the half sky and the warp of branches
let us approach them in our tiredness

let us have talk with roots
and with disenchanted waves

let us forget about hurry
the teeth of the efficient

let us forget the shadowy
miscellany of those who wish us ill

let us make a profession of being earth-bound
let us touch the earth with our beings.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Edmundo Desnoes (*An Adventure in the Tropics*) returned to Cuba in 1959, and since has served the government in various positions. This story was written especially for the filming of *Memorias del Subdesarrollo*.

Grace Paley (*The Little Girl*) had her most recent book, *Enormous Changes At The Last Minute* (from which this story was excerpted) published last month. Her work has appeared in *Fiction*, *Esquire* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. She teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.

Christina Stead (*A View of the Homestead*) is currently at work on a book set in the America of the Thirties. Two of her novels, *The House of All Nations*, and *The Man Who Loved Children*, have recently been reissued by Holt.

Paul West (*Tan Salaam*) has published seven novels, most recently, *Caliban's Filibuster*, *Colonel Mint* and *Bela Lugosi's White Christmas*. He is currently teaching at Penn State and is at work on a new novel.

Joy Williams (*A Story About Friends*) is currently at work on a new novel to be called *The Changeling*. Her last novel, *State of Grace* was published last year. Her work has also appeared in *Esquire*.

Eduardo Zayas-Bazan (translator of *Edmundo Desnoes*) came to this country from Cuba twelve years ago. He is presently chairman of the Department of Languages at East Tennessee State University and is co-editing a volume of Spanish-American short stories to be published this fall.

INTERVIEWS

Michael Newman (*Interview with W. H. Auden*) is currently on a fellowship at the Macdowell Colony. He has been published in *Poetry*, *The New York Times*, *Book World* and *The New York Quarterly*. He studied poetry with Mr. Auden until the poet's death in 1973.

W. I. Scobie (*Interview with Christopher Isherwood*) has had poetry published in *Encounter* and *London Magazine*. He lives in Santa Monica, California where he writes for the *London Observer*.

POETRY

Jack Anderson is the author of two books of poetry and has received a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship for 1973-4. Also a dance critic, he is currently writing a history of ballet and modern dance.

Gevorg Emin is one of the leading poets writing in Soviet Armenia. He has been translated into Russian by Pasternak, and into almost every other modern language. He was trained in the sciences, and graduated from the Poly-

technic Institute in Yerevan, Armenia the same year his first book of poetry was published.

Diana Der Hovanessian has had her poetry published in *The Nation*, *Harper's*, *The New York Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Mademoiselle*, *Ararat*, and the *Armenian Review*. She works as the poet in the schools in Newton and Quincy, Massachusetts under a grant from the Massachusetts Council of the Arts.

Richard Frost has published two books of poems, *The Circus Villains* and *Getting Drunk with the Birds*. His poetry has appeared in *Poetry*, *Harper's TriQuarterly* and *Sewanee Review*. He is currently living in Bavaria, West Germany, but in the fall will return to Oneonta, New York where he is a professor of English at the State College.

Cynthia Genser is currently at work on a collection of poetry. She is 23 and lives in New York City. This issue of *The Paris Review* marks her first appearance in print.

Geof Hewitt lives in Enosburg Falls, Vermont. This is his first appearance in *The Paris Review*.

Jill Hoffman's first book of poems, *Mink Coats*, was published recently. Her poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The American Review*, *The Quarterly Review of Literature* and *New Republic*. She is currently at work on a novel and teaches at Brooklyn College.

David Ignatow has published numerous books of poetry, including *Poems 1934-69*, *Rescue the Dead*, *Figures of the Human* and *Say Pardon*. His most recent book is *The Notebooks of David Ignatow*.

David Kelly's most recent books were *Collections for Viewing a Solar Eclipse*, and *At a time: A Dance for Voices*. He is poet-in-residence at the State University of New York — Geneseo.

Greg Kuzma has been published in *Poetry*, *New Yorker*, *Apple*, *Shenandoah*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Prarie Schooner* and others. *Good News*, a collection of his poems, was published in 1970. *The Buffalo Shoot*, is forthcoming. He lives in Crete, Nebraska.

W. S. Merwin is the author of numerous books of poetry and translations, including *Writings to an Unfinished Accompaniment*, *Asian Figures*, *Transparents of the World*, and *The Carrier of Ladders* for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972.

Alistair Reid has published numerous translations and books of poetry. His translations of Pablo Neruda will be published in July. He is currently living in London.

Stephen Sossaman lives in Cambria Heights, New York. This is his first appearance in *The Paris Review*.

Ricardo da Silveira Lobo Sternberg lives in Los Angeles, California. This is his first appearance in *The Paris Review*.

Brian Swann recently co-edited and translated *The Collected Poems of Lucio Piccolo*. These poems are excerpted from an unpublished collection, *Scenario for a Farce*.

Elena Wilkinson lives in New York City. This is her first appearance in *The Paris Review*.

ART

Red Grooms has shown with John B. Meyers at his various galleries for over thirteen years. He participated in the Venice Biennale in 1968. His Ruckus World constructions were shown at the New York Cultural Center in December 1973 and will be shown in Caracas at a major exhibition opening in April, 1975.

Peter Lobello's next exhibition will be at the Foster White Gallery in Seattle, Washington. He is presently at work on a series of folding metal sculptures.

At press time a number of contributors notes have not been received. They will be included in the next issue if space allows.

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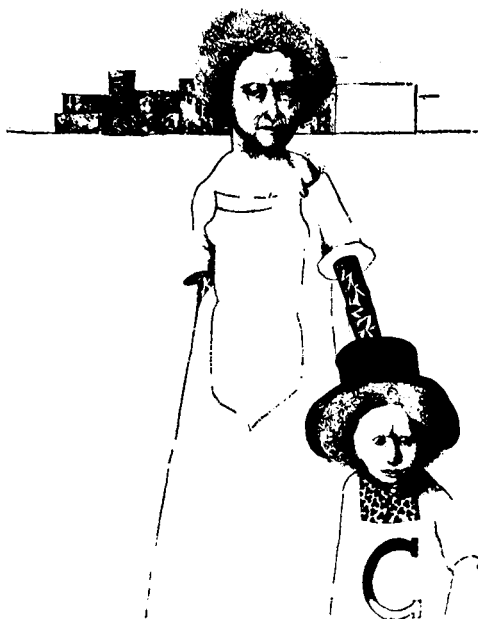


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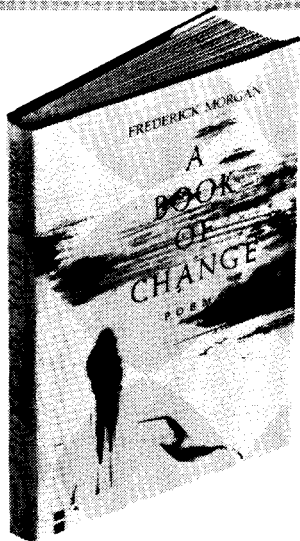
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